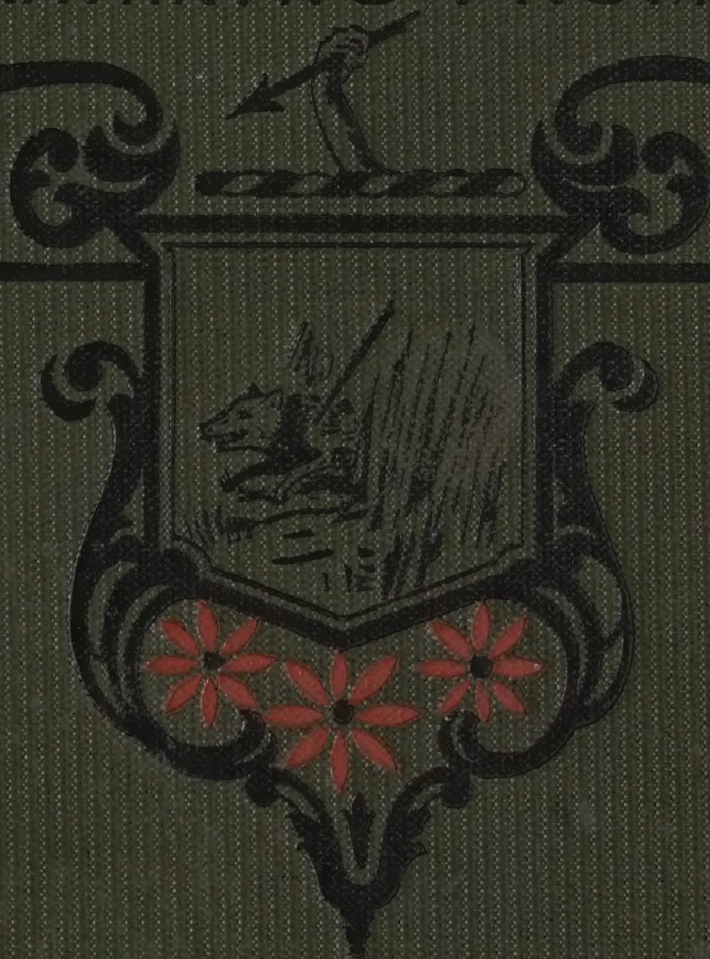


THE FLEETWOOD EARL
OF FLEETWOOD

OR KATHRYN'S PROMISE



MRS. S. F. ANNIS



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✓ THE NOBLE EARL OF FLEETWOOD,

OR,

KATHRYN'S PROMISE

Mrs. S. F. Annis
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By

MRS. S. F. ANNIS.



Dedicated to

MISS S. R. SMITH,

A dear friend who, with gentle sympathy, sweet solicitude and cheering praise, has lent encouragement to

THE AUTHOR.

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The Noble Earl of Fleetwood

CHAPTER I.

THE COUNTRY HOME.

"Where is the maid of mortal strain
That may match with the Baron of Triermain?
She must be lovely, and constant and kind;
Holy and pure, and humble of mind;
Blithe of cheer and gentle of mood,
Courteous and generous, and noble of blood—
Lovely as the sun's first ray,
When it breaks the clouds of an April day."

ABOUT thirty miles from the city of Williamsburg, seat of the Royal Government of the Colony of Virginia, was a small village, situated on the York River. And near this place, on the east, stood a residence, unpretentious, though picturesque in the extreme, the hills and bluffs along the river lending a charming background to the scene. Poplars, tall and spare, stood along the fence, which was rugged and down in places, giving the place an appearance of having been neglected. Inside the yard a black palfrey eagerly munched the dry grass.

In the cosy sitting-room of this home sat Mrs. Aranton and her daughter, Kathryn, beside a yawning fireplace, in which blazed a fine wood fire. The sun had just gone down under a dark-gray cloud, as Kathryn could see from a window by her side. Starting up, she exclaimed:

"Oh, I'm so glad, mother! I hear Ned coming. I have missed him so much to-day."

"Yes, we miss the dear boy sadly when he goes out," returned Mrs. Arranton.

Footsteps were now heard in the corridor; the young man entered, threw off his greatcoat, hat and gloves, and stood brushing the dark locks from his brow, as Kathryn, opening the door, gave him welcome, saying:

"Oh, Ned, you truant! We've missed you to-day."

Mrs. Arranton welcomed him with a sweet, sad smile, inquiring:

"How liked you your work, Edwin?"

"Quite well, my dear aunt; it is grand to go into the forest, fell the great trees, and trim them up for firewood."

"And, poor little Ned, do you really like to labor with your own hands, and did you get a good load o' wood?" asked his cousin, Kathryn.

"Indeed, we did, cousin. Silas is fine with the axe, and I am not slow myself; and I do like it," he said bravely.

Ned was a slender lad, scarce seventeen, with handsome features and mild, dark eyes.

They sat conversing for a time. Presently a little bell jingled in the distance, and they with one accord arose and repaired to the dining-room.

Here, near the fire, a small table was arranged for three. A tall, angular negro woman stood behind the chair intended for the mistress.

With great dignity she drew back the chair, and, seating her mistress, she placed an Ottoman under her feet, then proceeded to serve the evening meal.

This was a small family—Mrs. Arranton, her daughter, and her nephew, with two negro servants. Mrs. Arranton—a widow, a beautiful woman, somewhere near five-and-thirty, but so well preserved was she that

she might be called five-and-twenty, a woman of elegant bearing, wearing a tender and sorrowful expression. The young girl did not in the least resemble her mother; sixteen, scarce fully grown, though large for her age, plump and rosy, her complexion creamy and soft, distinctly differing from the clear marble-like whiteness of that of her mother, her hair a mass of dark gold-brown.

Their dinner consisted of rich, creamy milk, butter, white biscuits, Indian pudding, and eggs, with a second course of native fruits and nuts.

The frugal meal soon dispatched, they returned to the sitting-room.

Mrs. Arranton took up her knitting, while Kathryn and her cousin turned their attention to a game of some kind.

"How is it now, mother, with your knitting; are you soon to have the piece done?" asked Kathryn.

"It grows apace," Mrs. Arranton replied.

"Slowly, is it not, mother? And I am not to marry until it is finished. It is an extra fine piece of silk lace, Ned, which she learned to knit in St. Cathrin's Convent in Paris. She says I shall wear it on my wedding gown—on the corsage, Ned," she said gaily.

"Well, cousin, you are not impatient to have it finished?" queried Ned.

"It will be done in good time," said Mrs. Arranton calmly.

"Ho, Ned, my dear cousin, see how she puts me off! I very much fear I shall be an old maid ere the piece is finished—eh, mother?"

"Oh," returned Mrs. Arranton, "I have a number of years in which to perform my task."

"Aha, now, mother! Are not you like the faithful Penelope, who, in order to put off her suitors, prolonged her work by raveling out at night what she had

accomplished in the day? And do you thus, mother, remain awake o' nights to unravel your lace-work?"

"You are young yet, Kathryn, to even joke about marriage; but your destiny lies hidden in the future," remarked Mrs. Arranton gravely. "Situated as we now are, your prospects are dark; you must wait till the proper knight comes along. And since our position in life is different from what it formerly was, you can never expect to be mated with one your equal in birth and lineage."

"I perceive, cousin, my aunt is in no hurry to finish the piece," observed Edwin.

At this juncture Silas, a young negro man; or rather lad, entered by a side door, and deposited a large load of wood on one side of the broad hearth.

"What of the weather, Silas?" inquired Mrs. Arranton. "Is it growing colder?"

"Hit's all over cloudy, mam; 'spect hit's gwinter snow, missis."

"Well, Silas, if it does snow we'll not be able to get so much wood to-morrow," said Ned; "but we have in plenty now, so let it snow!"

"I's gwinter let hit snow, mas' Ned," Silas replied, seating himself on a low stool close in the corner, and from a closet near at hand he drew forth a small basket of cotton fleece and a pair of cotton cards, and began assiduously to card; making the cotton into nice soft, white rolls for the morrow's spinning.

Phyllis, having finished the kitchen work, now came in, also; for in this family, so few in number, all gathered at eventide around the bright, blazing fire. She walked with measured tread to the aforesaid closet and brought forth a basket of seed cotton, which she proceeded to scatter in little heaps along the hearth, at a safe distance from the fire, thus heating the seeds, which rendered them more easily removed from the lint; for in those days this staple was ordinarily picked

by hand, the only machine for the purpose being a small wooden roller gin worked by hand. She began deftly to pick cotton, a light task, indeed, in which Edwin and Kathryn joined, sprinkling each other now and then, playfully, with a handful of cotton seeds.

"It seems, mother," said Kathryn, after a time, "that Mr. Barry is determined to put Cousin Ned in college after Christmas; what shall we do when he is no longer with us?"

"Perhaps we can have dear Mrs. Edmonds come and remain with us and teach you music, as she did while we were yet in Williamsburg."

"Oh, mother, could we do that, it would be glorious!" exclaimed the impulsive Kathryn. "But could you afford it now, in our reduced state, and could dear Mrs. Edmonds exist here in this out-of-the-way place?"

"Darling, I will study over the matter. Oh, that I might place you in the good old Convent of St. Catharin's, where my grandmother, my mother, and I myself were educated! It would be a consummation of the hope of my life. But be that as it may, Mr. Barry wishes to keep Edwin in William and Mary until he graduates, if his means are adequate to that effect."

"Yes, dear aunt; and when I am a great barrister you shall at least have your old home in Williamsburg again, or one as good, and you and Kathryn shall not be obliged to live in this out-of-the-way place—this obscure corner of the world," said Edwin proudly. "If the little my father left me will carry me through college, I can then make a good living for you, who have had all the care of my childhood and are the best and dearest friend I have ever had since my father's death, having never known a mother's love but yours."

"You have ever been a good boy, Edwin, and since your father brought you to me, a helpless infant, I have ever felt that you were a blessing to me. Your father

and my husband, being twin brothers, loved each other very much. But, Edwin, instead of being a barrister, you should, in justice, sometime become a Scotch peer, your father, being the elder, was but four removes from the dignity of a Baron."

"Aye, Edwin," chimed Kathryn, "'a noble peer of muckle trust and power.'"

"They descended from an ancient Scotch family, the Hamiltons, earls of Arran. One of your ancestors many years ago married the only daughter of the mortal enemy of his father, the Earl of Bute, a Stuart, and related to the Hamiltons. He succeeded in escaping with his bride from the Island of Arran, and, secreting himself in the southern part of Ayrshire, changed his name to Arranton to avoid detection by the enraged earls. Here he built himself a home, and was soon surrounded with every luxury. After his death one of his sons was knighted for his chivalry, and one of *his* sons was afterward made Baron of Montstuart and Strathdoon and awarded two fine estates; but for some misdeed your great-grandfather, who had succeeded to the barony, was executed, and the title and estates have been held in abeyance for nearly a century. But you may, in time, my boy, become a baron," Mrs. Arranton concluded complacently.

"Indeed, my aunt, I shall not look forward to anything of that kind, but endeavor to hew out for myself a name of which we need not be ashamed," Edwin returned nobly.

"True, Edwin, your grandfather, General Arranton, was as noble a man as any peer of the Scotch realm, or British, either. And the happiest hours of my life, I do believe, were those spent in his home when you and Kathryn were about two years old. Your grandmother was a glorious woman, and well knew how to manage a household."

"Dat's so, li'le Missy ; dat's jes' so !" exclaimed Phyllis. "Missis 'longed to de quality ; dat she did, chile."

"And how we enjoyed the trip to Scotland, when General Arranton went back to visit his brother after the death of their father !" continued she.

"Will you not, dear aunt, tell us of that visit to Scotland, and of Uncle Donald's marriage?" asked Edwin.

"When you both were about two years old my husband took us to General Arranton's to remain some time, while he and his brother went to Paris on some diplomatic business. Your grandfather, General Arranton, lived in grand style, on a great plantation where he employed many slaves, in a fine neighborhood near the city, where there was much social enjoyment ; there were many delightful homes, with much old-fashioned culture. The brothers returned in a few months, having had a most satisfactory trip, from a business view. Then we had news from your Uncle Donald, stating that his father had died and he wished his brother, General Arranton, to come over and make his home with him at Arranton Castle, in Ayrshire, on the River Doon. General Arranton decided to go and take all of us along for a visit. In a short time we embarked, having disposed of everything and all the negroes but Aunt Phyllis and Silas, who were retained to care for you children on the voyage. That was a great change for us. How we enjoyed the voyage ! The approach to the castle was grand ; the scenery fine ; the castle imposing. Great mountains lay in the distance, forming a lovely background for the magnificent structure, which bore in many places the cognizance of the Earls of Arran ; the towers and turrets appeared to reach up into the dark clouds which overhung the whole. We had been there but a short time when Uncle Donald announced his intention of being married in about six weeks. Having never married, he was quite an old bachelor,

very ambitious, ever living in hopes of the restoration of the honors and estates to the family; he fully believed they would be restored, for a wandering astrologer had foretold it would be so in the eighteenth century.

"Now, everything was to be gotten ready for the reception of the bride, who was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Athole, and related—I think second cousin to Uncle Donald."

"How old was Uncle Donald, mother?" queried Kathryn.

"Four-and-fifty; Lady Elenor, his bride, was somewhat younger, though we never knew how old she was.

"Splendid preparations were commenced for the approaching nuptials; messengers were sent hither and yonder, for we were to attend the grand wedding, which was to be solemnized at Blair Castle. Dress-makers were ordered in, Mother Arranton and I had elegant costumes made up in the latest French mode. Everything must be in readiness, also, for the reception on our return. We set out in our private coach, drawn by eight large horses, with a great following of servants. Blair Castle was about one hundred miles distant, but we were undaunted at the prospect of the long journey in the country, for it promised us much pleasure. We spent the first night in grand old Glasgow; and passed next day through the historic city of Stirling. There our party was joined by a number of relations, starting, also, for Blair. After leaving the Perthshire lowlands the road became narrow and ragged; in some places there were great precipices on either hand. We wended our way up the noted Killiecrankie Pass, where a few years previous had been fought that memorable battle where 'the victors mourned and the vanquished rejoiced.' The lumbering coach was with difficulty dragged up the

deep and dark defile ; then we emerged into a beautiful glen, crossed a small river where were masses of gray crags, dark verdure and fantastic peaks. The waters murmured among the mossy stones and gurgled and glided over the smooth pebbles bathed in golden sunlight. Now for the first time we could see the turreted towers and battlements of old Blair Castle. On arriving, we were received with great courtesy by the inmates, and after two days' rest from our long journey the nuptial rites were celebrated in the great chapel. The bride stood at the altar in rich array ; the silken sheen of her snowy robes, overspread with the soft tissues of the misty veil which flowed full length over the billowy folds of satin, glimmering in the bright lights ; diamonds sparkling amid the dark tresses, and pearls gleaming on her snowy neck."

"Oh, mother, was she not beautiful?" eagerly asked Kathryn.

"No, darling, she was not even pretty ; but looked somewhat regal in her magnificence. The bridegroom looked grand, but stiff and formal in his cold dignity. The great halls were filled to overflowing with the numerous relations — Hamiltons, Stuarts, Murrays, Arrans, and others. Then followed the great feast, where freely flowed the ruddy wine, the banquet comparing favorably with the almost regal splendor of the surroundings. There were gallant old warriors, who ersewhile had led their clans through many victorious battles, who laughed and talked loudly of other days, clanged their bowls, and grew merry over their sparkling wine. Gallant knights, whispering softly of love, led fair ladies through the mazy dance ; the fair ones smiling, bowed, nodding their snowy plumes, while music from the minstrels' gallery filled the vast hall with sweetest harmony.

"We soon returned to Arranton Castle, accompanied by a large bridal party. Then, after enjoying a

few months with Father and Mother Arranton, we proceeded to London, where my husband and his brother were assigned offices in the British Embassy, and went to Paris, where we lived in much happiness for a number of years, when your dear father died, Edwin, and my husband's health failed; then you both remember when we returned to America." Mrs. Arranton closed her narrative with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Yes, dear aunt, we well remember when we came to America," said Edwin.

"And we lived in Williamsburg two such happy years ere we came to this place," observed Kathryn.

"Now, children, I think we should retire; Phyllis has finished her task of cotton, and Silas has a fine bank of snowy rolls for the morrow's spinning," suggested Mrs. Arranton.

Next morning Silas was building a fire in the great fireplace in the kitchen, while Phyllis busied herself preparatory to getting breakfast.

"Aunt Phyllis, you 'member dat place what lil' Missy telled us about las nite?" Silas asked abruptly, "dat Kilumkranky pass?"

"Humph, nigger! You spect I's dun forgit bout dat already? I 'members all 'bout dat trip myself," Phyllis replied, with much self-importance.

"Phyllis, did yer see any gostes that time, hidin' ahint dem big trees an' dem rocks," asked Silas.

"No, I aint nebber see no gostes dar nor nowhars else!"

"I ben nearly scared to def dat day goin' up dat pass. Aunt Phyllis, you 'member dat skandliferous Dougal MacCann, what went long of us fer to help me tak keer of all dem hosses?"

"You 'spect I's gwine ter forgit dat skoundril—dat little ole Skotch, what nearly plagued de life outen me, an' you too, des kes we black folks? He called us niggers!"

"He say da's lots uv Englishers killed in dat place, an' he see der gostes a-peepin' frum ahint dem rocks an' trees. I teclar, Aunt Phyllis, I been scart plum to def ridin' long ahint wid dat Dougal. Dey just make us keep ahint all de res', and every blessed minnit he'd holler out: 'Look! Look out! See dar? Look ahint ye!' I teclar I was nearly scart to def."

"Humph! You foolish nigger!" exclaimed Phyllis. "I wan't scart. I nebber saw no sech gostes as dat villyan Dougal telled you 'bout; fore de Lawd I wan't scart—no, I never got scart, chile."

"I spect you nebber—a ridin' in de kerriage away back ahint Mas' General Arranton, an' ole Missis, an' lil' Missy, an' Mas' Albert, an' Mas' William. I wouldn't a been scart, neither, ef I'd been dar. Do you 'spect dem gostes was a gwine ter trouble anybody whar Mas' General Arranton was? No, sir! He been soljer—he fite dem Englishers some hisself—'spect he killed whole passel of dem in dat dretful pass, rite dar whar we all was——"

"Hush, nigger!" exclaimed Phyllis, throwing up her hands. "You doan hafter say not'ing 'bout dat; hit's a plum secret. I hern tell as how Mas' General Arranton did fite dem Englishers ober dare, den kummed away to dis country ter keep frum gittin' kitched; but doan you say ary word about hit. Now you better g'long an' milk dat cow, and stop tellin' your goste stories here. You know bery well I hain't afraid ob gostes nohow, you coward!"

Silas, with much trepidation, took up the pail and went forth into the dusk of the morning twilight. Phyllis stood awhile, glancing about; then:

"Dat nigger tellin' 'bout gostes a-peepin' frum ahint de rocks an' things," she murmured, "mity nigh gives a body de creeps." With a wary and unquiet eye she glanced over her shoulder and about the dark corners of the room, for the fire was not yet burning

very brightly, and the little iron lamp swinging from the chimney front failed to expel the inexorable shadows of the apartment.

"Des makes a body feel sorter—— Ooh, ooh, oh, ki!" she cried, turning quickly, as she heard a slight noise behind her. "Ooh—um—um! Honey, dat you? Sho nuf! I thought hit was you. Oh—oo——"

"Why, Aunt Phyllis; did I frighten you? What made you jump so?" asked Kathryn, as she approached the fire.

"Frighten me, baby; no! You 'spect I's gwine ter be frightened at you? Purty thing! What you up so early foh, baby?"

"Mother rested badly last night, Phyllis, and I came to ask you to make her a nice cup of tea and some of your famous waffles, and cook her a soft egg, Phyllis; you know you can just beat anybody making waffles."

Kathryn had learned that a little flattery went a long way with Phyllis.

"Yes, Honey, chile, I lib'd in Parish long 'nuf to learn how ter cook, long of dem 'chefs' dey calls um in dat 'mbassy place. Honey, chile, what make yo' Ma feel so bad this mornin'?"

"Why, you know, Phyllis, we were talking last night of those old and happy times when father was living, and before we had lost everything; the remembrance of past pleasures contrast so painfully with our present surroundings, Phyllis. We should not have asked her, but we so love to hear her tell of those old days," returned Kathryn, meditatively. "I'll go back now, Phyllis, and when I hear the little bell jingle I will come and take her breakfast to her on a tray."

It was a cold morning. Kathryn warmed her little slippered feet over the fire, drew her heavy wrapper about her plump form, then ran through the cold corridor into the sitting-room, where a bright fire blazed on the hearth, and proceeded to dress herself.

CHAPTER II.

THE BARON OF WEIRWOLF.

"The sun upon the Weirdlaw hill,
In Ettric's vale, is sinking sweet;
The westland wind is harsh and still,
The lake lies sleeping at my feet."

TOWARD the last of October, and about the same time of the occurrence referred to in the opening chapter, a young nobleman, with about twenty followers, might have been seen wending his way up the beautiful valley of the Esk, in southern Scotland, which is known to include some of the finest farming lands in Great Britain.

The turreted towers and battlements of Weirwolf Castle now appeared to their view, in the distance. The mighty mass, having the appearance of a gloomy fortress, had been added to in different periods, as was shown by the variance in its architecture, the builders having regard more for durability than for beauty and symmetry.

"Behold, Guy! 'Tis a fair sight," said the young Baron of Weirwolf, as they rode on, taking in the lovely scene. "See the charming river, winding in and out, with the magnificent farmlands of Weirwolf lying along its sides."

"Beautiful, my Lord, as a poet's dream!" returned his companion; "I fancy you have inherited a fine barony, even if it has an outlandish name."

"I visited my grandfather here once, at the age of ten, now near twelve years ago—the only time I was ever on the premises," said the young Baron. "My grandfather was at that time a man of great wealth, and lived in princely style. I never afterward had the

pleasure to see him; he died about six years ago, while I was yet in Oxford. I have never been here since, and never saw my late uncle, he being absent at the time of my visit. I have an aunt," continued the young man, retrospectively; "she was a lovely girl—fair as a lily, who, some fifteen years ago, married, against the will of her parents, a Lieutenant O'Neal of the army then stationed nearby, at Locherby, and was disinherited. See, Guy, towering above all the rest a great square tower!"

"Oh, aye, my Lord," responded Guy; "methinks there should be a fine view from that tower."

"Inside there is a narrow stairway, which gives access to the parapet extending around the tower; then you mount a broad platform, from which you may trace the symmetrical windings of the lovely Esk."

"Up to the highest battlement, from whence
The Trojans threw their darts."

quoted Guy.

"Ah, Guy! When you shall mount to 'yon battlement your poetic soul will soar away in an ecstasy of delight," returned his Lordship, as he now turned his attention toward a fine herd of contented cattle grazing along the river banks, some of the breed of the old Scottish cattle—milk white, with black muzzles, horns and hoofs.

"I suppose, my Lord, there is in the chase an abundance of game, and we will have no end of hunting," observed Guy.

"Aye, Guy, the copswood glens are peopled with deer, hart and hind—goodliest of all the forest—with pheasants, grouse and heathcock. You will not go amiss for game, I can assure you," replied the youthful baron. As they were now approaching quite near, he continued: "Look up over the great Gothic entrance and observe; there is sculptured in the stone a shield with the cognizance of my ancient ancestors. The

only figure on the clear field of the shield is a long-haired, shaggy, snarling wolf, represented as skulking, half hidden amid the heather, his side invulnerated with a broken spear."

"Aye, a savage-looking beast, that! And this, my Lord, is the coat-of-arms which you are now to assume?"

"Aye; it is incumbent on the heir of Weirwolf to bear the name and arms—but here we are, Guy, at the old drawbridge. I see no porter hereabout."

One of his lordship's own men dismounted and opened the gate, which was not fastened, the country now being at peace.

On entering, there was no one to be seen; perfect quiet reigned, all inside wearing a dilapidated and neglected appearance. An old dog roused up and stretched himself, apparently too old or too indolent even to bark at the intruders. The young nobleman and his followers passed into the courtyard, and he, after glancing about, exclaimed to his companion:

"Well, Guy, I am astonished! What can this mean? Behold the dilapidation! The place looks as though it had been deserted half dozen years, at least."

Seeing no one, Lord Clifton said: "You are at home, men; dismount and unload your sumpter mules and horses. Duncan," he said, to his groom, "see to the horses. There should be a number of servants here—look about, Ambrose; see if there is any one around. There in the west wing you will find the servants' quarters."

The door of the great entrance hall was thrown open; a gray old man made his appearance. Lord Clifton, entering, said:

"Is not this old Caleb?"

"Aye, aye, sir; this ees Caleb. But wha ees this that comes e'en noo wi' sic a mighty following?" the old man asked, with wide-eyed astonishment.

"Why, Caleb," his Lordship said, grasping warmly the old man's hand, "do you not remember little Robert Clifton, who was here ten years ago?"

"Aye, thae wee laddie wha camed lang syne? Ah, sure, sure, me Laird!" cried old Caleb, arousing himself to a degree of pleasure; "Caleb will not be forgetting thae douce laddie."

Proceeding up the hall, the young man was soon met by a tall, slender lady of delicate build, plainly dressed. Her face was sweetly sad. A young girl, with saucy face, pouting lips and laughing eyes, stood behind her, representing the sole animation of the place, and appearing to be altogether out of place in her doleful surroundings.

"The Baron of Weirwolf, I suppose?" said the lady, advancing to meet him with graceful movement, extending her hand.

"I—ah— Yes, madame, I believe so," he returned, trying to pull himself together, "though I am almost dumfounded. Pray, whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"I have the honor, my Lord, to be your lordship's Aunt Mary, Mistress O'Neal."

"My dear Aunt Mary!" he exclaimed, in great surprise; "how can so great a change have taken place?"

"In me, my dear nephew, or in that you see about the place?" she asked.

"Why, both," he returned, and he pressed her hand and saluted her on the cheek. "Though," continued he, "the last time I saw you you were a lovely young girl—a blooming bride."

Her face colored up a little at this remark, and she said to the girl:

"Nora, offer Sir Robert Weirwolf a chair."

His lordship thought it a little strange she should offer him a seat in the hall, on a chair none too good

for a servant, instead of asking him into a sitting-room or parlor.

"Had I known of your presence here, dear aunt, I should have sent a messenger to apprise you of my coming. I ask your pardon for thus taking you by surprise," he said, accepting the chair which Nora offered him; and Mrs. O'Neal seated herself opposite her nephew. "But my men, as well as myself, dear aunt," he continued, "like to camp out and hunt, so we made it a party of pleasure, rather than a journey of business, and have taken our leisure in making the trip from Fleetwood, being three days on the way, instead of making it in two. I owe you, dear aunt, a thousand apologies; I never dreamed of meeting you here, and expected to find no one except a house full of the old family servants, and perhaps the Bailiff, but am more gratified than words can express to find you, my dear aunt, whom I have not seen for years, occupying your ancestral home."

"Thank you, sir; thank you!" she said, then exclaimed: "A house full of servants, indeed! You will find only two of the old servants here—Caleb, the old steward, and Elspeth, his wife, whom you doubtless remember. And, my Lord, had you dispatched a message to apprise me of your coming all would be just as your lordship has found it, lamentable as it is. My late brother's lawyer had informed me that I might expect you at any moment."

"Dear aunt, you astonish me—only two servants in the castle! That, I suppose, accounts for the unkept appearance of things. Pray, where is Mr. Kitchner, the Bailiff?"

"In the village, my lord; in his own home. He has not resided here since the death of my brother, the late Baron of Weirwolf. You will find all things here, my Lord, just as I found them on my arrival, five

years ago, save for the wear and tear of time, of course," she returned, calmly.

"Dear aunt, you astound me! Did my uncle live here amid such surroundings, without servants?"

"Indeed he has lived here just in this manner since the death of my father, after which event he sent for me, whom he had not seen since my marriage, and placed me here as housekeeper, after sending away every servant save the two whom I have named."

"You as housekeeper! My dear aunt, what can it all mean? It appears that my uncle must have been something of a recluse or hermit—a miser, if I may say so much of your brother."

"Ah, Clifton, he was your uncle. Should you say such things of your uncle?" she asked, naively.

"True, dear aunt, he was my uncle; but people to be loved must be lovable. What could have been his object in living thus, without servants, allowing the place to fall into dilapidation. Can you explain?"

"My Lord, whenever I spoke to him on the subject, his invariable answer was, 'We must retrench; we must economize!' For a long time he appeared very unhappy, but after his last trip to Edinburgh he seemed to be much relieved, and assured me that in a short time all would be different; but never revealed to me his secret. The last time—Nora, dear, go to the kitchen and stay with Elspeth until I ring for you."

Nora obeyed, reluctantly enough; she was enjoying something quite novel to her, their lives here had been so very quiet since the death of the Baron, six weeks before.

"Who is the girl?" asked the Baron, as Nora disappeared through the far-off door leading to the dining-room, looking back as she went.

"An orphan, daughter of Captain Shane, Lieutenant O'Neal's Captain and friend; they were killed

on the battlefield, side by side," she said, with a sigh. "Her mother and I were friends. She survived her husband only two weeks, and left the little Nora with me. Nora is now fourteen years old, and is the only companion or attendant I have had for the past five years—a dear, good child, altogether Irish."

"Please to resume your story, and pardon me for interrupting."

"Certainly, my Lord. The last time I was in Edinburgh, two years since, for my brother did not take us with him last Christmas, as usual, but went alone, on horseback, I met one of my cousins whom I had not seen for years, and she told me the secret. Now, do you wish to hear it, my Lord? It will explain to you his motive for the manner in which he has lived since the death of my father."

"Certainly, aunt, if you deem it proper that I should know it."

"My cousin told me that my brother was betrothed to her sister, Lady Esther Ellington, eldest daughter of Sir Edward Ellington, my mother's brother—now thirty-two years old—just my age. She had never married, owing to a disappointment she met with at the age of seventeen—and thereon hangs a little story which I may some time relate to you. She is an heiress, having inherited from her maternal grandmother fifty thousand pounds sterling, at that time considered a very fine legacy, indeed. She being a haughty, imperious, money-loving woman, promised my brother that when he could put up an equal amount in pounds sterling she would become his bride. What think you of that proposition, nephew?"

"Dearest aunt, I would let no woman lead me in such a manner. I would marry no woman with a stipulation or moneyed consideration," he said firmly.

"Ah, perhaps you have never loved a woman, and

know not yet what love will lead a man to do," returned his aunt.

"Aunt Mary, it is as you say: I have never loved a woman yet, at least not enough to become a miser for her sake. And should one ever make such overtures to me, I will at once tell her to seek another mate. I believe in love, and if I should ever love a pure, sweet woman, that is enough for me. I would be willing to marry her without a dowry; and if a noble woman should love me, I should expect her to marry me without bargain or stipulation. I shall never hire a girl to marry me. I do not want one who would not be content with just my pure and undivided love."

"Dear nephew, you are a man after my own heart. But, as I was saying: From that day to this he has hoarded up every cent he has received, save just a bare support, or subsistence."

"Dear aunt, my grandfather, at the time of my visit here, was thought to be a man of great wealth. He lived in almost regal splendor. How could he have become so reduced?"

"My father, some years previous to his death, had become greatly involved financially. As one of the stockholders in the Scottish East India Company, he became excited by the enormous gains of the Indian trade and invested all of his available capital, besides much more of borrowed money, in this scheme. Owing to some maladministration somewhere, he lost all, and was left without income, save his annual rents, which should have been sufficient for his needs. Yet the loss affected him greatly, and he survived it only two years. It was just after father's death that my brother, wishing to marry Cousin Esther, she promised conditionally. In order to accumulate the requisite amount as speedily as possible, he sold the splendid horses, dismissed the servants, and allowed the place, for want of attention, to fall into a dilapi-

'dated state, as you see. Besides, the tenants' houses are all in need of repair. And here I have lived for five years, under the darksome shadows of the towers, hemmed in by grim battlement and fosse, with only a glimpse of social life about once a year, when we would visit relatives in Edinburgh for a fortnight, usually at Christmas-tide."

"Dear aunt, why did you remain with him, under such trying circumstances?"

"When Lieutenant O'Neal was slain, I was left penniless, with my boy, Rorey, and Captain Shane's baby, Nora, having been disinherited for marrying him. I assure you I have suffered for marrying hastily and in opposition to the wishes of my parents, as I believe all must suffer for disobedience; not that Lieutenant O'Neal was at all to blame, for he was a perfect gentleman, and did all in his power to make me happy. His family had been reduced from great affluence to poverty by the relentless hand of war, and he had nothing but his salary as officer in the army. I could have found a home among my wealthy relatives, but this did not suit one of my independent spirit, and when my brother sent for me to come back to the old home I was too glad to accept his invitation, and felt, to serve as housekeeper in the dear old home, whence I had long been banished, would be preferable to living among my relations as a pensioner on their bounty. I was never a devotee to social pleasures, and for many years my heart had been, as it were, dead to all social life," she said, with a deep-drawn sigh, while a roseate glow overspread her wax-like face, and continued: "I had an intimation that my brother would be married about next Christmas-tide; for on his return from Edinburgh he appeared much happier than usual, and said: 'The lease money now due on the city house will be brought in at Martinmas, and that, with the rental

of the back-going, mismanaging, dog-whelf tenants, put over at Whitsunday, also due at Martinmas, will enable me to put everything in good shape. I'll have the old castle renovated and filled with servants by the first of December, and the place will present a different aspect.' Then, poor man, not to live to reap the fruition, after all his self-denial." She rang for Nora; then continued: "If it had not been for his self-denial, I might have thought, and sometimes did think, that he wished to punish me for my marriage, for he had been incensed and had taken it very much to heart; but he denied himself every pleasure, save that of visiting Esther." Here Nora reappeared, and Mrs. O'Neal said:

"Nora, look in the little desk in my room and bring the key you will find there."

"Where is your boy now—Rorey, I think you called him—Aunt Mary?"

"Yes, Roderic is his name; he goes over to recite a few lessons in the evening to Mr. Browning, the rector, since my brother's death."

Nora brought the key, as requested, which Mrs. O'Neal handed to the young man.

"Now, my Lord, unlock the door at the right of the drawing-room; it was his room. That, with the library, my own and the servants' rooms, are all the apartments I have had access to since I have been here, and if it had not been for the liberty of using the library, I do not see how I could have existed these five years. There, my Lord, you will find the bunch of keys, which has not been touched since his death, and hangs just as he left it."

Lord Clifton took the key and, unlocking the door, stood on the threshold, gazing about the poorly furnished room—the comfortless bare floor, the old straight-backed chairs, an old settee, an uncovered desk.

"Why, this is the secretary's room, Aunt Mary," he said.

"Yes, my Lord, he was his own secretary."

"I must have this nicely fitted up for Guy Brignol, my secretary," musingly.

"Wait, my nephew; do not hasten to put any one in this room, but first let me tell you of a secret door there is here somewhere," she said, feeling along the wall opposite the door by which they had entered. "I see nothing here resembling a door, my Lord, yet there is one here."

"Why do you think so, aunt?" he enquired.

"Let us sit here a moment, my Lord, on this old settee, while I shall tell you what I have seen. Nora, sit here, child, on this chair, and keep quiet. I am quite devoted to literature, my Lord, and the Father of us all only knows what I should have done if my brother had locked me out from the library, as he did all the other apartments, and one evening I sat up late, reading. Turning, I discovered a bright light emanated from the transom over the door of my brother's room—this room, here. Following the light with my eye, I saw him standing in a doorway just opposite—where I had never suspected there was a door. I stood looking; not, I am sure, from any undue curiosity, but with astonishment, I suppose. Then he disappeared, not going on through, but down, down, until lost to sight. In his left hand he carried a rushlight, holding it high overhead, and in his right hand he carried, it seemed to me, a heavy weight in a bag. It being the twenty-fifth of March, called Lady Day, quite a number of his tenants had been in to settle quarter dues; and I have every reason to believe he was going to store away his money. But where the door is, I cannot imagine."

Lord Clifton rose and went over, saying:

"Let us examine the wall, aunt."

She followed, and, placing her hand on the wall opposite the door, said: "It was just here I saw him pass through."

Examining the panel, they discovered a bit of paper pasted on one edge.

Tearing this away, Lord Clifton found a keyhole. Searching among the keys, he found one of peculiar shape. Inserting this, he gave it a turn, then shoving the panel, it swung open, revealing a dark space. They then perceived stone steps leading down.

"There is no doubt, Aunt Mary, that he concealed his moneys in a vault below, but we will close the door for the present, and after awhile we, with Rorey and Nora, will go down and explore the vault. Would not you like to go, Nora?" he asked, kindly.

"Oh, yes indeed, my Lord; I should very much like to go."

"I thought so," he returned. "Now, Aunt Mary, come with me and we will open up some of the other rooms." Unlocking the door to his right, leading to the large and beautiful drawing-room, they found every piece of furniture well and carefully covered. Pulling the covering from several pieces, his lordship found magnificent furniture of the richest material and finest make.

Then the young Baron of Weirwolf went down the great hall, to the door by which he had entered, and called:

"Louis, bring two servants and follow me; and bring some fuel and build a fire in the grate; it is growing colder, and we will want a good fire to drive out the musty smell of this long-closed room." He looked into the library, which was found *comme il faut*, then passed on to the opposite side of the great hall, and opening the door just at the foot of the stairway, disclosed an elegant suite of rooms, beautifully hung with crimson velvet, fringed with gold.

The first apartment was fitted up as a sitting-room; then there was a bedroom, sumptuously furnished; the third was a dressing-room, in fine style, having a fireplace with grate.

"Ambrose," said the young baron to his attendant, "take charge of this suite of apartments at once. Open windows and doors; give them thorough ventilation; build a fire, and have it ready for my immediate use. Louis, please send Andrew Long after us." And, turning to his aunt, he led her up the broad stairway, Nora following behind like a shadow. Reaching the corridor, he found a number of closed doors on either side, and began to unlock and throw them open, disclosing elegant suites, the furniture, as in the other rooms, all covered.

"Andrew, go to work here and uncover all this furniture, open doors and windows, and let the air circulate through the old building," said his lordship. "Now, Aunt Mary, I wish you to select the nicest suite of apartments here for your own use, and one for Nora, and never go back to the housekeeper's rooms again, for you are now to be mistress of this castle, if you will; and to-morrow I will have every servant's office filled, from turret to basement."

"Oh, my Lord, I cannot express my gratitude for your kindness. I did not know but that on the coming of the new lord I should be forced to go out and seek a new home somewhere," returned she, feelingly.

"No, my dearest aunt; no! You, so like my own dear mother, so far as I can remember, shall never while I live seek another home. In my grandfather's day this was a princely home, and shall be so again. And I know that you, dear aunt, were the princess of this castle for a number of years previous to your marriage, and now you are to be queen of this little realm."

She gave his hand a gentle pressure and raised it

to her lips. Then, wiping the tears from her eyes, she turned to a suite on the left, being the first on the front part of the building, the windows looking out on the main road leading to the castle, with a lovely Italian portico reaching out from the front end of the corridor, a great French window opening onto it. "My Lord," she said, with deep emotion, "in my girlhood these rooms were mine. How happy I should be to be permitted to call them mine once more."

"They are your very own, dear aunt," he said. "Andrew!" he called, "leave to the boys that work, and come here yourself and put this suite of rooms in order for immediate use"; then to Mrs. O'Neal: "My dear aunt, this was your father's house, and I do most sincerely wish that, instead of leaving it to me, my uncle had left everything to yourself and your son."

"No, no, my Lord; that could not be. It is entailed, and you are the heir of entail," she said, tremulously.

"Andrew," said his lordship, "when you have done here, you can go down. You men can house yourselves in the west wing to-night, and do your own cooking; there are no cooks here yet. Now aunt, we will go down and sit by the fire; you must rest. Are you not tired tramping after me?"

"Oh, not at all, my Lord; at least, I have been so excited as not to notice that I am."

Drawing her hand within his arm, he led her down the broad stairway, as if she had been a queen, closely followed by Nora. As they neared the foot of the stairway a bright-looking boy entered at the front door, just opposite them, with some books in his arms. He paused, in utter astonishment, on seeing his mother descending, leaning on the arm of a tall, gallant-looking knight. His surprise was soon turned into joy, for Mrs. O'Neal introduced him to Sir Robert Clifton, Baron of Weirwolf, whom he knew to be

his own cousin. Clifton, too, was much pleased with Rorey O'Neal's bright, intelligent face, his fine eyes beaming with intelligence and good nature; and, though poorly clad, he showed his good breeding, for he had been well and carefully trained and taught by his mother, having had no other instruction until since the death of his uncle. Previous to that event he had been just a hack about the place. Conducting his aunt to the drawing-room, Clifton seated her in a superb chair near the fire.

"My Lord," said she, "I will have Elspeth prepare dinner for us in the large dining-room, so, if there are any of your attendants whom you would like to have dine with us, I should be pleased to have you invite them."

"Thank you, Aunt Mary; it would please me well to have Guy Brignol, my secretary, who is a special friend, and Louis Kearney, my master of horse, who has been with me many years—the son of a gentleman who was an old cavalier, and who rendered much good service to his country. Though, dear aunt, they would do well enough with the men, rather than trouble or embarrass you, for I assure you they are used to the camp."

"No, no, my Lord; I assure you it will be no trouble!" she returned. "I suspect there is some fine old wine in the cellar, and if you will give Rorey the key he can go himself and rummage out a few bottles."

"Dear aunt, you are now mistress of the castle, and must keep the keys," he said, handing her the great bunch. "You may wish to open the china cupboard or the silver beaufet for plate and glass."

Rorey took the keys and started for the cellar.

"No, aunt," his lordship continued, "I could not get on without either of my friends. Louis has been with me as a constant companion since I left the uni-

versity, and both traveled the Continent with me. They are good fellows, and both poetic, aunt, and quote Shakespeare on every hand. As for Guy, his father was an actor, and the boy was brought up around the footlights of a theatre—Excuse me, aunt, I will send Bangs, my butler, to Rorey's assistance," he said, rising, "and when they have gotten the wine Bangs can take charge of the dining-room for you." And he went out to the west wing of the building, where the boys were engaged in making themselves comfortable for the night around a cheerful fire in the servants' hall.

Availing herself of the opportunity, Mrs. O'Neal sent Nora to the kitchen for Elspeth, while she rested herself by the cheerful fire. Anon Elspeth came hobbling in, an old, gray, careworn creature. Mrs. O'Neal told her of her nephew's arrival, and of the change that was to take place in their manner of living, and requested of her the very best dinner possible, under the circumstances, for six—"My Lord, his two friends and ourselves. Nora and I will come in and prepare the table in the great dining-room, Elspeth, that has for so long been closed. Caleb may assist you, for his services will not be required elsewhere. My Lord's men will provide for themselves. And, Elspeth, have everything in the very best style, and remember that from this time we will live under a new régime—all will be under a new management—and there will be no further need for such strict economy. Use with a liberal hand what there is in the keep, for more will be provided."

Old Elspeth stood gazing with admiration around in the sumptuous room, into which she had not looked for five years, then said: "The douce laddie bring it some fine patriches wi' him in frae his trappie ae bit while syne; I will be roasting thim fo' me Laird."

"Yes, Elspie," said Mrs. O'Neal, "and I know that

you have some fine fat pullets and plenty of eggs; surely you will be able to get up something quite nice for his lordship and his friends!"

"Ah, sure enoch! I will be killing some o' me fine pullies," said the old cook, becoming interested in the prospective meal. She was an excellent cook, and was only too glad once more to have the liberty of exercising her ability, and proceeded at once to do her utmost to please the new Laird. She also was anxious to please Mrs. O'Neal, whom she loved very much, having been one of the family servants when Mary was a girl.

Then Mrs. O'Neal, with Nora following, went to the apartments adjoining the great dining-room, the housekeeper's rooms, which she had so long occupied, and, gathering up such of her wearing apparel and accessories of the toilet as she might need for the evening, she had Nora carry them up the back stairs to the beautiful suite of rooms at the right of the little front portico, where Andrew, in anticipation of her coming, had already arranged the dressing-room and had a little fire built on the clean hearth. She sent him down with Nora to fetch up some clean bed linen and other articles that might be required, which she had laid out for them, and had her bedroom put in order, while she stood before a beautiful chevel-glass and arranged her own hair, all the while explaining to Nora that this article and that had been her own when a young girl.

Nora, who seemed to be equal to all manner of service, darted hither and yonder, assisting her benefactress with her toilet in every way possible.

Mrs. O'Neal was a perfect blond, showing her Saxon descent, with wax-like complexion, a pretty mouth, lips rounded and of a vermilion hue, teeth white, regular and shining like pearls; in her bearing she was modest and gentle of motion. Now, excitement had

lent to her erstwhile pale face a roseate glow, and when Nora had smoothed down the graceful folds of her heavy black silk pelisse, the bodice of which was trimmed with rich, soft laces, she was not only a superb-looking lady, but was really beautiful. She explained to Nora that the magnificent dress was the very last that Lieutenant O'Neal had presented to her before his death, and that, on account of going into mourning, she had been obliged to lay it away for so long a time that perhaps it might now appear somewhat unfashionable.

"Now, Aunt Mary," said Nora, fingering the jewel casket, "shall I not take out the diamond brooch and the pearl necklace? How lovely they will look with the glistening black silk!"

"No, Nora; I shall not use them this evening; this little knot of white satin ribbon will be quite sufficient and more appropriate for this occasion. Now go, dear, and dress yourself. I will see Rorey and have him don his best apparel. I desire that he should make a good impression on his noble cousin, the Baron of Weirwolf."

Nora, bright and vivacious, appearing to glory in the change which had come about, tripped upstairs and down with alacrity, fetching such articles as she might require; then shook out the bedding and arranged the bed in her own pretty room adjoining that of Mrs. O'Neal.

After dressing, they went down to the dining-room to see that everything there was properly arranged for dinner. Mrs. O'Neal unlocked an elaborate silver buffet and a china closet, and she and Nora themselves laid the table, while old Elspeth, with the assistance of her "gude mon," Caleb Roundhead, prepared and served up an excellent dinner.

On returning to the drawing-room, Mrs. O'Neal met his lordship's two friends, who were duly pre-

sented. She found Louis a fine specimen of manhood, with regular features; his dark locks lay on his broad shoulders in a mass of fine curls, according to the fashion of the day. Guy was spare made, and not so tall as either the fine-looking young baron or Louis, with fair hair and blue eyes. Both were faultlessly attired in anticipation of meeting his lordship's aunt, Mrs. O'Neal.

"Dear aunt," the baron said, after the ceremony of introduction was over, "these are my friends as well as the directors of my affairs." Louis' attendance on the baron as esquire was far from implying anything degrading, but was considered as the regular school for acquiring every quality necessary for future distinction. And Guy was his secretary and a friend of long standing.

The dinner at Weirwolf was greatly enjoyed by the young baron and his two friends. The delicious viands placed before them were appetizing, for in addition to the partridges and broiled chickens there were fresh fish and an incomparable veal pastry with thick gravy, rich and brown; and there was cheese and ale; and the old wine was superb. Yet, had the fare been less inviting, it might not have been noticed, for Mrs. O'Neal, like a certain gifted French Lady of the old régime who was noted equally for her skill in making a certain fine pudding and for her ability as raconteur, entertained her guests so well with glowing descriptions of past splendors of Weirwolf that but little attention was bestowed on the fine repast.

"The magnificent display here, my Lord, in the days of my childhood, when my father, Sir Deorwyn Wynnewood—Deorwyn, my Lord, is a Saxon name and signifies "dear one"—when he, I say, kept the old castle in almost regal splendor, was not even to be compared with the splendors of his city residence on Southampton Square in London, where he spent most

of his time. The lofty front is richly adorned; at the entrance are beautifully carved pillars and canopies; the floors are tassellated after the French fashion; the superb banqueting-room is wainscoted with cedar and beautifully decorated with belligerent gods and giants in fresco. And at the sumptuous tables guests of high rank and fashion were seen quite often. Some of the apartments were finely sculptured with armorial bearings, fruits and flowers, and hung with emblazoned satin; and thousands of pounds were spent on the rich furniture of the sumptuous drawing-rooms. This city residence, my Lord, you will find, I think, in a good state of repair; for, although it has been in lease for a number of years, I know how well and carefully my brother had it looked after.

“The royal old coach, my Lord, so much admired by all, which your lordship will find in the coach-house nearly as good as ever, was a present to Sir Doerwyn from the King, and ever afterward composed part of his state; for they had been the warmest friends, my father and King William, for twice had Sir Doerwyn saved the life of the **King**.

“My Lord, I will give you a history of the gilded coach, or the old royal coach, as it is called, which my brother, the late Baron of Weirwolf, retained as an heirloom. Some years ago, when I was an infant, my father, Sir Doerwyn Wynnewood, who was an especial favorite in the court circle, followed King William to Ireland as an officer in the Life Guards, and during this campaign Sir Doerwyn twice saved the life of His Majesty. On the morning before the Battle of Boyn the King, with a number of his officers, rode along the banks of the river, examining the position of the enemy, lying at a little distance away on the opposite side of the river. Dismounting, they had their breakfast spread on the grass, and while enjoying their repast some men rode down to the river on the

other side who, recognizing the King, straightway and secretly had two field-pieces placed behind a hedge; and, just as the King was in the act of remounting after the repast, a shot rang out from one of the secreted field-pieces, and struck a horse just beside the King. Sir Doerwyn, seeing the great danger to which His Majesty was exposed, seized his bridle and, turning him suddenly, just as a second report was heard, saved him. The ball whizzed by, just grazing the King's shoulder, tore his coat, and spilled a few ounces of blood, and but for the timely interference of Sir Doerwyn, his life would have been lost. The King, for a little while dazed, presently said: 'There is no harm done, but the bullet came quite near enough.' And to Sir Doerwyn he said: 'My friend, you have saved my life.' Next day, in the very beginning of the battle, Sir Neal O'Neal, my husband's father, in command of a regiment of dragoons on the Irish side, received a mortal wound. On this day the King was seen wherever danger was greatest. He dashed into battle with sword in his left hand, for his right arm was stiff from the wound he had received the day before; a bullet struck his pistol, another tore off the heel of his boot, yet he was unharmed. His friends in vain begged of him to retire to a place of safety, where his life would not be so exposed. That night they slept under the open sky at Dunleek, their tents and wagons having been left on the other side of the river. The King slept in his coach, this same old royal coach. And afterward, on their way to Waterford to embark for England, the Life Guard ran into an ambush of Rapparees, under Balberg O'Donnell. On finding the King in great peril, my father rushed to his assistance, and in the act of defending him received a serious wound, at the time thought to be mortal. After reaching London, and not being able to travel on horseback, my father was placed in the

royal coach, which King William begged him to accept, with the six splendid horses, as a token of his appreciation of the gallantry of Sir Doerwyn in twice saving his life. I can remember quite well when my father returned home in the splendid coach—in those days none but the very rich traveled in their own coaches. Sir Doerwyn owned a coach, but nothing so elegant as the gilded coach, with its carved timbers, velvet cushions and pink satin linings, with prancing steeds bobbing their heads, all plumed, the silver mountings gleaming in the sunlight."

Mrs. O'Neal rose and, with a curtsey, said: "My Lord, I will now leave you and your friends to your wine. Come, Nora."

The men rose and bowed courteously, while Louis held the door open for them to pass out, saying:

"Truly Mistress O'Neal, we are not averse to a 'wee drap' after dinner."

"Come, Rorey, lad; bring hither a couple of rush-lights or lamps, and we will explore the subterraneous depths beneath your late uncle's private room and try to ascertain whether he has left us a legacy in cold cash."

The men had all repaired to their quarters for the night.

Rorey, leaving the room, soon returned with two small lamps. The baron unlocked the secret door, and, holding high the winking lamps, they peered down into the yawning darkness.

"Come, aunt," said his lordship, "I will lead you down this narrow stairway." Thus they led the way, the boy and girl following. At the foot of the stairs they came to a flagged flooring of a long passage, with stone walls. At the end of this passage was a door securely locked. A ponderous key was selected from the bunch and found to fit the immense lock; the huge bolt rolled back; the heavy iron door, creaking

on its hinges, swung slowly open. Lord Clifton stood a while, holding high his lamp, while the rays of light penetrated to the farthest corners of the vault, which had evidently been a prison in bygone days. Here, also, were altars, as if it had been a place of worship, too, and various specimens of Roman pottery, a figure of Mercury, and a mutilated statue of Hercules. In the farther end they descried two great iron-bound chests or coffers.

After looking about and finding nothing more of importance, they proceeded to the larger of the coffers. The baron handed Nora his lamp, saying:

"Nora, you and Rorey can hold the lights while I unlock this coffer."

Adjusting the key, he soon raised the heavy lid. All cried out on beholding the gleaming contents. The chest was filled with silver and silver-gilt services, and rare table ornaments of pure gold. And there were many pieces of sterling silver of great antiquity, and much splendid silver plate.

"Oh, my Lord," cried Mrs. O'Neal, "these are the splendid table services used in the sumptuous banquet-room in Southampton Square when Sir Doerwyn resided in London! My brother, doubtless, had them removed hither on leaving the mansion."

"Yes, dear aunt, beyond a doubt," he rejoined. "And here are caskets containing the family jewels," continued he, going to the depths of the coffer.

On opening these, how the jewels flashed and scintillated! And here was a coronet of a baron's degree, having six pearls set in equal distances on the chaplet.

"Yes," said Mrs. O'Neal; as a Baron of the United Kingdom, my brother had a seat in the House of Lords."

"Here, aunt, is a large brooch or clasp, used for securing the plaid or mantle."

"Why, my Lord, almost as large as a platter! Could

it, indeed, have been used in such a way? Only see with what exquisite and curious designs it is engraved," she exclaimed, "and decorated with most valuable stones!"

Clifton now drew from a casket a long, heavy gold chain with a cross attached of heavy wrought gold, scintillating with rubies.

"Oh, Rorey, boy," cried Mrs. O'Neal, "here is your own chain which we both thought lost or stolen! Oh, my Lord, this chain, or Eudorchawg, as it was called in Ireland, was placed upon the neck of Lieutenant O'Neal after some battle, as a badge of distinction, when he was only a lad, by an Irish nobleman; he having done some valuable service that day, it was awarded him for his valor."

"Rorey," said Sir Robert Clifton, placing the Eudorchawg upon the neck of the delighted boy, "as a noble son of a noble sire I place this Eudorchawg on your neck, and from this hour you are my page."

"I thank you, my Lord, for this great honor," returned Rorey smilingly.

Searching further, Clifton selected from a number of relics a small, dainty gold ring set with an emerald of much beauty, and, placing it on Nora's hand, he said:

"Nora, will you wear this small ring as a token of our friendship?"

"Oh, yes, my Lord; I thank you much—for your friendship, and for the beautiful ring, also!" she cried, with beaming face.

After replacing the pieces they had taken out, the baron locked the chest, then proceeded to unlock the other. In this the first thing that met his sight was the old rental book with great brass clasps. Beneath this were piles of gold pieces and silver—sovereigns, guineas, crowns; nothing but coins—coins of various kinds and of different valuations.

Now Clifton took up the old rental book and, throwing back the clasps, began to turn over the musty pages. Soon he came to the page of the last entry; and, while his young page held the light close, the Baron of Weirwolf read an estimate of the full amount of gold and silver contained in the chest. There was written out in full: "Fifty Thousand Pounds Sterling," and beneath were these words: "At last! At last! The struggle is ended, and now for happiness!"

"He might have written 'Alas! Alas!' in apprehension of his evil destiny," commented Sir Robert Clifton.

"Oh, my poor brother," cried Mrs. O'Neal; "how he labored and saved! But the relentless hand of death has robbed him of all." And she wept at the thought of how he had vainly struggled so many years.

"Dear Aunt Mary, it does seem hard when we think how suddenly he was snatched away. But do not let it grieve you so. This reminds me of the parable in Scripture of a certain rich man, who said to himself: 'Thou hast much goods laid up; take thine ease.' But God said unto him: 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?'"



CHAPTER III.

THE HEIRESS.

"November's sky is dark and drear,
November's sky is red and sear;
Late, gazing down the steepy linn
That hems our little garden in,
Low in the dark and narrow glen,
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled greenwood grew,
So feeble trilled the streamlet through."

THE very day on which the reader is introduced to

Mrs. Arranton and her family, in the parlor of a handsome residence in the city of Williamsburg, the Colonial Capital, two gentlemen sat engaged in close conversation. The elder of the two was something over sixty—a genial, whole-souled man, with gray locks brushed smoothly back from his brow; merry, twinkling eyes and rosy cheeks, as if in the best of health. The other, apparently about thirty, sat opposite in a straight-backed chair of ancient pattern; he was tall and slender, with soft brown eyes. His chestnut hair fell in loose curls from the very top of his head, down over his shoulders, and he was exceedingly genteel in appearance. This was Barry Crowningshield, chief secretary and confidential agent of the Earl of Fleetwood, Cumberland, England. The other, Mr. Barry, Barrister of Williamsburg.

“And so, Mr. Crowningshield, you received the information I sent you in regard to Mrs. Arranton?” queried Mr. Barry, in an animated tone of voice.

“Yes, sir; and glad we are, indeed, to receive the cheering news; for four years and over we have searched for this Mrs. Arranton without avail,” he replied, in a deep, rich voice; “and had just got on track of the Arrantons in Paris, where they lived for a number of years, when I heard from you.”

“Yes, her husband was a member of the British Embassy, until his health was broken; so, resigning his office, after the death of his brother, he came to this country; and, after mature deliberation, decided to settle down and build up by degrees a good plantation, thinking his health might be better here. In view of this, he bought a small place in the country, near a fast-growing town, expecting to add to it little at a time, as he was able; but he soon died, leaving his family rather poorly provided for. Having always lived on a salary, they had nothing left but the little home, and there they have lived since his death, on a

small income, with only two faithful old family servants. And now—oh, how rejoiced I am! I have heard her tell something of her mother's life; enough to justify me, on seeing your advertisement, in the information I sent you."

"And she has told you that she is the great-granddaughter of the old Earl of Fleetwood, and granddaughter of the late Lady Hawren; that her mother, Lady Mary Hawren, married Lieutenant Auguste Victor Dubois-Raymond?"

"Yes, sir, that is the way I have understood it; and Lady Mary, her mother, was disinherited on her marriage with Lieutenant Dubois-Raymond, and never more heard from the Baroness, her mother," replied Mr. Barry, with intense interest.

"And, Mr. Crowningshield, do you say that her mother repented on her deathbed?"

"Yes; after her two sons were killed in battle, and she had no one to leave as her heir, she began to cast about for her daughter, Lady Mary, or some of her offspring."

"I am delighted, sir; delighted!" exclaimed good Mr. Barry, rubbing his hands with great satisfaction. "Oh, sir, she is a most estimable lady; and this will be good-fortune for her, poor, broken-hearted child! She grieved so at not being able to finish her daughter's education in Paris. She is a magnificent girl. And the boy, her husband's nephew, is a fine fellow, who has lived with her since about one year old. There was very little left him at his father's death. He was left in my care, and I expect to place him in William and Mary College as soon as the holidays are over. And to-morrow morning, early, Mr. Crowningshield, if you please, sir, we will set out to see and break the news to dear Mrs. Arranton."

"Lady Hawren, sir; she is Lady Hawren, beyond a doubt!"

"Aha! Lady Hawren; how nice and appropriate!" returned Mr. Barry.

A servant came to the door, and announced:

"Dinner is ready, Massy John."

At this juncture two elegantly dressed ladies entered the room. Mr. Barry rose and said:

"Now, Mr. Crowningshield, I take pleasure in presenting you to my wife, Mrs. Barry; then, turning to the younger lady, he said: "And this is my niece, Mrs. Edmonds, Mr. Crowningshield."

"I have great pleasure, ladies, in making your acquaintance, I assure you," said he, "as this is my first visit to America, and you are the very first American ladies I have met."

"Thank you, sir"—and the ladies curtsied low—"we are glad to be first to welcome you to our shore." And Mrs. Barry took her husband's arm and led the way to the grand dining hall. Mr. Crowningshield courteously offered his arm to Mrs. Edmonds, and followed.

* * * * *

"Oh, mother, mother, come to the window! There is such a grand coach, with black horses, the like of which I have not seen since we came to this quiet place; such as father had before all our troubles came on! Oh, come and see, mother!"

"Why, Kathryn, you seem to be excited at sight of a carriage; though, truly, we have not seen such a one since we came to this place, two years ago!"

"Oh, mother, perhaps 'tis some of our city friends, coming to make a visit! And oh, how can we entertain them here in this small house, and no servants but Phyllis and Silas?"

"It may be some business men, some barristers, going to the village beyond. But would it not be nice and pleasant, after all, to have some of our friends? Suppose it is Mr. Barry and his dear wife; how glad I

should be to see them! Dear Mr. Barry, who was so kind to us in our affliction, and who wound up our business affairs in such way as to secure to us this quiet nook! I feel that had it not been for his cleverness in managing and untangling our affairs we should not have had a cent left us."

But, mother, Phyllis is such a grumbler; you know how she fusses if one of our country neighbors happens in to a meal; then, mother, dear, you know things are so different from what they were when father lived and had everything in great style—but see, mother, they are *not* passing by! They draw up, the footman is descending to open the gate. They are turning in! Oh, who will meet them—shall I call Phyllis?"

"No, Phyllis takes pride lately in dressing as badly as possible, and makes such a grotesque appearance——"

"It is Mr. Barry—and another most elegant-looking gentleman!" exclaimed Kathryn, all excitement. "How bright and happy he is looking; he must have pleasant tidings!"

"Yes; dear Mr. Barry!" exclaimed Mrs. Arranton. "Let us hasten to the front and admit them ourselves, and give them a hearty welcome to our little home."

"Oh, Mr. Barry, how glad we are to see you! Welcome, welcome!"

"Charmed to see you looking so well, Mrs. Arranton. And how is our little mischief-loving Kate? Mr. Crowningshield, come right in, sir. Mrs. Arranton, allow me to present Mr. Crowningshield. Miss Arranton, Mr. Crowningshield."

"Lay off your raps and come into the sitting-room, where we have a cheerful fire," said Mrs. Arranton.

"Oh, it is not cold to speak of; we have enjoyed a pleasant drive, and no inconvenience from the weather.

But ah, this is a marvel of comfort!" he said, seating himself, and holding his hands over the glowing coals.

"How is Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Edmonds, and why did not they accompany you, Mr. Barry?" asked Mrs. Arranton.

"Oh, Mrs. Barry and Emily are well, and were quite busily engaged, I assure you, Mrs. Arranton, preparing to receive visitors."

"Mr. Crowningshield," said Kathryn, "how did you enjoy your trip across the country?"

"Oh, very much, I thank you, Miss Arranton; the drive was exhilarating; but," he said, while a slight blush tinged his fair face, "I should have appreciated having the ladies along."

"You have, then, met dear Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Edmonds?"

"Yes, and admire them, too! I think it fine to be in America."

"You have not been here long, then?"

"I arrived only yesterday; just a short time since I embarked at Liverpool."

"Liverpool?"

"Yes, Miss Arranton; and enjoyed a fine voyage."

"My dear Mrs. Arranton, there is no wind so ill that it blows no good to any," said Mr. Barry, with a glowing countenance. "Mr. Crowningshield is just from England, and is bearer of important news."

"Yes, Mrs. Arranton; I am confidential business agent for Malise Clifton, Earl of Fleetwood."

"Earl of Fleetwood! Is it possible my great-grandfather still lives! Or, who is the Earl of Fleetwood now? Malise Clifton was the name of my great-grandfather; can it be possible he still lives? No; vain hope! I have ever entertained a hope that I might one day see him—yet, no! He is too old; he is dead ere this. Vain hope!"

"Yes, Lady, he still lives—yet, tell me, Mrs. Arranton, who was your grandmother?"

"Lady Hawren, Baroness of Hawren. Oh, does she still live?"

"No, Lady; she died four years ago, and I have come to communicate to you the important fact that you are to inherit all her immense wealth. You are now yourself, Lady Hawren."

"Oh, surely not! Where are my two uncles who were to inherit all?"

"Your two uncles were killed in battle many years ago, and it is said they were found side by side on the battlefield, as if they had striven for each other."

Mrs. Arranton buried her face in her hands and wept. Kathryn went over to her side and, placing her arms around her neck, said:

"Dearest mother, do not weep for them; you know they were cruel to your mother, and your grandmother disinherited her and would never see her again after she married."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Arranton, where did your mother die?"

"In Paris, sir, leaving me with the Dubois-Raymonds, my grandparents, my father having died a few years previous."

"Yes, Lady Hawren; your great-grandfather still lives, and enjoys health at the age of one hundred—has passed his one-hundredth anniversary—and has sent me to bring you and your daughter to him before he dies. Her sons being dead, your grandmother, Baroness of Hawren, on her deathbed repented, and requested that you, the only child of her daughter, Lady Mary, whom she had so cruelly wronged, should be found and brought back to inherit the old homestead and made heiress of the Hawren estates. Your grandfather requests me to say to you spare no expense to have everything as it should be. I have de-

posited in the city of Williamsburg all the money you can possibly need for the occasion. And he desires that you should come accompanied by a retinue suited in every way to your station as heiress of Hawren and granddaughter of the Earl of Fleetwood. You, dear Lady Hawren, shall lack nothing, no matter how much you may require." Mr. Barry rose, and took her hand, saying:

"Oh, may God's blessings be and rest upon you, Lady Hawren! I am happy, indeed, to bring you such good tidings; and now you and Kathryn are to bundle up and go back with us to-morrow. That is the reason wife and Emily did not accompany us; they are making great preparations for your reception. I told you, Kate, they are preparing for visitors," said he, turning to Kathryn and taking her little trembling hands in his.

"Oh, Mr. Barry," cried Mrs. Arranton, "and all this time you have had no luncheon! I must have you something immediately. I had quite forgotten your long drive and have left you to famish."

"Not so, Lady Hawren—now you must let me call you so—we stopped a few miles back, at the little inn, and had a refreshing meal, so do not trouble yourself in the least; but we will have to remain overnight with you, in order to rest up the horses and give you a little time to make your preparations. Where is the dear boy? Where is Edwin?"

"Oh, my dear Mr. Barry, he is a working boy; and went out with Silas to-day to the forest to help lay in the winter supply of wood. He will be in later."

"Laying in wood for winter, is he? A provident young man."

Kathryn, seizing the opportunity, left her mother asking many questions of Mr. Crowningshield relative to her grandfather, and flew in quest of Phyllis. She met her coming in from the barn, where she had been giving directions to the driver and footman, in regard

to feed for their horses, as Edwin and Silas were away. Phyllis was astounded when Kathryn rushed up to her, threw her arms around her neck, and burst into a flood of tears.

"'Fore de Lawd, honey, what in de worl' de matter wid yer? What all dese folks a-comin' here fo', an' what's I gwine ter cook for dem ter eat? 'Spose I got ter cook for um. Now, baby, what yer cryin' for?"

"Oh, Phyllis, we are no longer poor; we are rich! Mother's an heiress; and you shall have everything you want to cook; and you know what a fine cook you are! And, Phyllis, it is dear Mr. Barry, and there is a fine gentleman with him from England, who has brought us all this good news; and I know you will get up a fine dinner for them, Phyllis."

"Whar I gwine ter git things ter cook, baby? Whar you 'spect I's gwine ter git um?"

"Phyllis, I know! Mother has about five pounds; you run and saddle Fraxinella for me, and I will gallop off to the village in no time and select everything we shall need, and have a great dinner."

"Look here, honey, how you gwine to tote um on dat little palfer?"

"Oh, I'll have them put in a large basket, and get Benjie White to bring them for me. I will get fish, oysters, and, oh, everything; and you can dress some chickens, Phyllis; your chickens are so fat and nice! Have plenty, too, prepared for breakfast in the morning. Then—oh, Phyllis, we are all going to Williamsburg with Mr. Barry, and not stay here any longer. Now, I'll run and don my habit and be ready in no time."

"Look heah, baby; don't yer know your ma been savin' dat little money for 'mergency? She 'spect sumthin' might happen; somebody git sick, or sumthin'. She's sabin' that money for 'mergency, honey."

"Oh, Phyllis, something has happened; the emer-

gency has come, and now it is in demand. And, Phyllis, can you get the chambers upstairs ready for the company? Is there plenty of snowy bed linen, and is there spotless napery for the table, Phyllis?"

"Humph, baby! Jes' come heah," said Phyllis, as she proceeded to the farther end of the dining-room, where she knelt down and opened a large chest.

"Phyllis been sabin' sumpin' for 'mergency, too! You 'spect I's gwine ter use up all dat fine linen what ole Mistis gived to li'le Missy when she marry Mas' Albert? You 'spect I's gwine ter hab dat fine linen wore out usin' it ebery day? No, chile. I hope Mistiss General Arranton make up all dis linen, an' I's gwine ter teck keer of it, too!"

And she unfolded lovely table linens and pillow cases; then drew from the very depths of the old family chest a couple of fine old hand-made, double dimity counterpanes, redolent of lavender blossoms, with rose leaves dropping from their folds. Kathryn clasped her hands in an ecstasy of relief and cried:

"You dear old Phyllis! How nice of you to save all these things for us! Oh, we will have everything just lovely! Now, bring the pony, Phyllis. I will send Mrs. White over, and she and I will arrange the dining-room and the chambers for the guests; you will have enough to do. Then we'll keep Benjie to bring in wood and water and help around."

She darted off, but soon returned in her habit, her gray hat loaded with plumes, and set out at a full canter. Turning down the right line of fence forming the west boundary line of the plantation, she drew up at a small cottage, where the Widow White lived with her son, Benjie, who made for himself and mother a scant living by working on the plantation.

Kathryn soon notified Mrs. White of the change which had taken place in their fortunes, and of her intention of providing a nice dinner for their guests;

desired Benjie to accompany her to the village to carry home the basket, and asked Mrs. White to go over and assist Phyllis in arranging everything, and also to partake of the fine dinner which she was resolved to have.

"Well, Miss Kathryn, to be sure we will come and help you all we can; and you will find Benjie already over at the store."

Thanking Mrs. White, Kathryn sped on her way, and ere long had made all needful purchases, soon returning home, followed by the faithful Benjie, a stout-built lad, with a well-filled basket on his head.

Phyllis was delighted with the many good things provided for her to cook. Mrs. White and Kathryn soon had the table arranged in perfect order, and to the great delight of good Mrs. White, in rummaging through closets and cupboards, they found many a piece of fine china, or quaint silver; old bowls, dishes and spoons that, when burnished, added greatly to the brilliancy of the table.

Then Mrs. White took the lovely old counterpane with the bed linen and went upstairs and prepared the two bedrooms, while Kathryn dressed herself in a pretty and becoming crimson cashmere, trimmed with white lace, then went into the sitting-room and joined in the conversation.

Presently Edwin came in and was greeted with great warmth by his guardian; then was introduced to Mr. Crowningshield.

He was soon informed of Mr. Crowningshield's mission. And, while Silas built a fire in the drawing-room, Edwin conducted the gentlemen to their apartments, that they might prepare for dinner.

When the men had left the sitting-room Kathryn threw herself into her mother's arms, and both wept.

"Oh," cried Kathryn, "who could have dreamed of such good-fortune coming to us!"

"Darling, it is no more than should have come to us years ago; they have been searching for us so long. And Mr. Crowningshield has been telling me so much about my great-grandfather; he is such a dear, nice old gentleman; do not you know we shall love him dearly?"

"Yes, mother, I know we shall love him; and, mother, isn't Mr. Crowningshield *so* elegant?"

"Yes, and has lived with grandfather at Fleetwood for years. Oh, darling, it is approaching time for dinner, and what can Phyllis provide for our guests? I am in despair—we so seldom have visitors—and am almost overcome with excitement!"

"Mother, everything is nicely arranged for dinner; do not be disturbed about that. Good Mrs. White is here, helping Phyllis; she and I have arranged the table beautifully. Come to your room, now, and I will help you dress."

When they reappeared Lady Hawren, as we shall now call her, was dressed in a robe of rich black material, plainly made, with a fall of black lace and crêpe at the throat and wrists, making her white throat and dainty hands look more white and dainty still. Her face was now flushed from intense excitement, her eyes sparkled like jewels, and she was more lovely than ever.

Kathryn drew her on down the corridor and into the dining-room, saying as they went:

"Now, mother, I will let you see what is being done toward dinner." There she beheld the table covered with snowy linen, and fairly glittering with bright silver, sparkling glass, and choice bits of china.

Lady Hawren dropped into a chair and threw up her hands, exclaiming: "Surely, I am dreaming, or there is some sorcery about this, or else I am bewitched."

"No," said Mrs. White, with a jovial laugh; "it is

all real, as I can testify, for there stands the witch, if there's one," pointing to Kathryn. "She and Benjie went to the village and have brought out enough for a great wedding of everything that is good."

Lady Hawren started back to the drawing-room and met Edwin in the corridor lighting the little terracotta lamps, swinging by little chains from an *Ægean* candelabrum of great elegance. He extinguished the lighter and caught his aunt in his arms, giving her a warm kiss.

"Dear aunt—dear Lady Hawren," he cried, "I am so glad that you are to be placed in your proper sphere once more, and that you are to leave this poor little lonely place, where you have had so much sorrow." Giving Kathryn also a hug and kiss, they passed into the drawing-room, where Edwin had already conducted their guests, who, with elegant courtesy, rose and stood while the ladies were being seated. Mr. Crowningshield crossed the room to inspect a painting on the wall opposite, saying:

"I trust, Lady Hawren, that you will pardon a display of curiosity on my part; I cannot resist a temptation, a great desire, to examine more closely this quaint painting."

"Mr. Crowningshield, excuse me; it is not adequately lighted," she observed, as she passed by him, and with the nice perception of an artist arranged the heavy drapery at the west window so that the setting sun threw a flood of radiance on the picture, bringing out the quaint figures in lifelike beauty.

"How lovely!" he exclaimed. "Is this, Lady Hawren, the work of your hands?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" she said.

"It is to me an unfamiliar subject."

"Yes, it is a simple and relatively unknown scene, and was taken from Raphael's exquisite representation of the *Sposalizio*, which was painted for the Church of

San Francesco, near Cita di Castello, a town of Umbria; and was brought as a trophy of war, during the trouble between France and Italy, to the Convent of St. Cathrin's in Paris, where I was a student."

"I claim some artistic ability, myself, Lady Hawren," he said, "and pronounce that a chef-d'œuvre—a wondrous masterpiece."

"Mr. Crowningshield," she said modestly, "it has been so pronounced by some of the best connoisseurs of Paris."

"Observe," he said admiringly, "the figures are grouped with exquisite grace and skill; the poetic delicacy throughout the whole is far above any I have ever seen. Will you not explain it to me? It appears to represent a marriage; and some of the men behind the bridegroom seem to be angry, from the emotion depicted in their faces, while others—the women behind the lovely bride—look placid and beautiful, especially the dainty lady just beside her, so richly and elegantly costumed, in the heavy flowing drapery of the day."

"Yes, sir, it is the Sposalizio, or marriage of the Virgin. It seems there were a number of suitors for the hand of the Virgin, and, in order to decide which of them should have the 'Chosen Maiden,' recourse was had to divination. Every man was to take a rod and lay it up in the Temple, and the man whose rod should miraculously put forth leaves and blooms was the chosen one; and when the ordeal was at hand, behold! Joseph's leaved and blossomed, it is said, pure white lilies. Mary was, therefore, betrothed to him by the High Priest, who in the picture stands in flowing robes near the centre with long, gray beard, his costly robe showing a rich, heavy border, and wearing on his head a high cap. He is joining their right hands. Joseph holds in his left hand the rod, displaying leaves and flowers. Mary stands on the other side of the

High Priest, with pure, innocent face and long, gracefully flowing robes. The discontented suitors, with passion depicted in their faces, stand behind Joseph, some ready to strike the favored one, while others break their rods in spiteful fury."

"Lady Hawren, that is certainly a top masterpiece of art. Fine! Very fine!" said Mr. Crowningshield, just as Silas stepped up to the door and announced dinner.

Lady Hawren led the way, leaning on the arm of Mr. Barry, while Mr. Crowningshield, Kathryn, and Edwin followed.

Mrs. White greeted Mr. Barry as her kind benefactor, for his kind generosity had placed her here, after her husband had been cruelly murdered in an Indian massacre; and she greatly appreciated his kindness. Phyllis, after a cordial greeting from Mr. Barry, hastened to seat her mistress in a high-backed chair at the head of the table and adjusted a soft Ottoman under her feet. Mr. Barry and Mr. Crowningshield were seated at Lady Hawren's right; Kathryn and Edwin took seats on her left. All bowed in reverence, while Mr. Barry pronounced a benediction. Mrs. White stood at the foot of the table and served soup in the small and dainty bowls, which Benjie, with some trepidation and awkwardness, handed on a silver waiter, this being his first attempt to serve in the capacity of waiter at table.

Dinner was greatly enjoyed by all. After dinner, when all were assembled in the drawing-room, Mr. Barry and Lady Hawren had a long talk, in which it was arranged that Mrs. White should be installed here as housekeeper, and Benjie given employment on the place; an overseer, with several negro families, would be sent out to work the plantation and put into cultivation more of the valuable land.

Tobacco culture was the chief occupation of Vir-

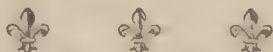
ginians at that time. Thousands of hogsheads of this valuable product were shipped to Liverpool annually, where there was a great market for it. And vast fortunes were made from it in a few years.

Mr. Barry owned several rich plantations run by negro labor, and had already realized an independent fortune from it, outside of his lucrative profession as barrister, or apprentice-at-law.

Phyllis and Silas were to remain a day or two and, assisted by Mrs. White, pack the valuable pieces of furniture and heirlooms which Lady Hawren wished to take along, and Mr. Barry would send for them in a few days.

Edwin was to stay with Mr. Barry and enter college.

"And," said Lady Hawren, "I wish Silas to remain with Edwin, as his attendant, for he was, in Edwin's infancy, his nurse; and I feel that he should remain with and care for him. I will take Phyllis with me; she nursed my husband and has cared for me and Kathryn, and is now getting old. I feel that I should care for her in her old age. And, my dear Mr. Barry, I desire that all moneys coming to me from this plantation be used for Edwin's education, for I well know that the meagre sum you now hold for him will scarcely carry him through college; and I am most anxious to have him placed in Oxford next year. And, my dear friend, he need not know this, for he is so independent he would scarcely accept it if he knew."



CHAPTER IV.

AMONG OLD FRIENDS.

"How deep that blush!—how deep that sigh!
And why does Lucy shun mine eye?
Is it because that crimson draws
Its color from some secret cause,
Some hidden movement of the breast

She would not that her Arthur guess'd?
O! quicker far is lovers' ken
Than the dull glance of common men,
And by strange sympathy can spell
The thoughts the loved one will not tell!"

WE look again into the handsome drawing-room where first we met Mr. Barry and the pleasant Englishman, Mr. Crowningshield. Mrs. Edmonds and her friend, Miss Annie Hamilton, were seated on a sofa in the deep recess of a front window, now and then looking out, expectantly.

"Oh, surely they will soon be here. I am getting impatient to see dear Mrs. Arranton and Kathryn; and especially do I wish to meet the elegant Mr. Crowningshield, whom you so gloriously describe—auburn curls and dark-brown eyes; he must have made an impression on your heart, Emily."

"Be careful you do not lose your heart, my dear Annie. But nay, he is not for you!" replied Mrs. Edmonds.

"How did you describe his looks? Tall, slender, fair skin, dark, chestnut hair; brown eyes, a slight moustache—faultless?"

Miss Hamilton was a granddaughter of Andrew Hamilton, former Governor of New Jersey, and was descended from the old family of Hamiltons of Hamilton Castle, Scotland, and distantly related to the Arrantons. She had a wealth of black hair, brilliant eyes, rosy cheeks, and a dainty mouth—but her nose was large, and Roman.

"Here they come, sure enough, this time!" she exclaimed. And a coach turned the corner and drew up immediately in front.

Mrs. Barry, followed by a number of servants, came bustling out to receive them; the two young ladies also followed.

The footman opened the door of the coach. Mr.

Barry and Mr. Crowningshield descended, and were warmly welcomed by the ladies; and Mrs. Edmonds introduced Mr. Crowningshield to her friend. Lady Hawren and Kathryn were handed out, and received with a great demonstration of joy. Then Edwin sprang out and was cordially received. Mr. Barry, turning to his wife, said:

"Mother, this is our boy, now. At least, he is to remain with us a while."

"Yes, yes; how glad we are to have you with us again, Edwin! Lady Hawren," she said, "you must be nearly exhausted from your trip. Emily, you and Annie can take the ladies to their rooms, where they may have a few moments of rest before dinner. I will send your trunks up immediately, Lady Hawren."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Barry; I do feel a little fatigued and shall be glad of a little rest."

They were conducted upstairs into a large, pleasant and beautifully furnished room. Lady Hawren and Kathryn, after taking off their wraps, lay down on the snowy bed. Mrs. Edmonds and Annie drew their chairs up beside them and enjoyed a fine, old-time talk before time to dress.

"Mr. Crowningshield," said Mrs. Edmonds, "has told us all about his long search for you, Lady Hawren, and of your grandfather. We are so rejoiced; yet are sorry to give you up. How shall you manage? What will you do first?"

"Truly, there is much to be done before we arrive at Fleetwood. We leave here in a few days for Paris."

"Oh, are you going to Paris? Then possibly we can make the trip together, as I am, as usual, to spend Christmas with my sister there, and had expected to embark in one week."

"Oh, how delightful! Then we may go together. Mr. Crowningshield is compelled to go by way of Paris on some important business, and I must neces-

sarily go by, in order to have some good clothing made up for myself and Kathryn, who have for two years lived free from all social life and must have something a little fashionable; then I must procure suitable teachers for Kathryn, and employ maids, attendants and servants to make up a suitable retinue. And, besides, I wish to visit my relatives in that city."

"What teachers shall you want, Lady Hawren?" asked Mrs. Edmonds.

"I shall need a teacher of literature, French, and English; one for vocal and one for instrumental music," replied Lady Hawren.

"Lady Hawren, I have taught Kathryn the music she has learned, both in Paris and at this place, and do feel distressed to have her taught by any one else."

"Oh, Mrs. Edmonds," cried Kathryn, "if you only would go with us! You and Annie, both; oh, do!"

"Kathryn must have a companion," continued Lady Hawren, "suited to her age; and I shall much need a dear friend and companion. If you could, indeed, go with us, dear friends, how much more to our advantage it would be than having to seek among strangers for what we want!"

"Lady Hawren, Annie is a superb vocalist, as you know; you could not find a finer or more suitable one anywhere. She is the best that has ever been in our city, and studied under the finest tutors in Paris. How could you do better than have her, if she will go?" said Mrs. Edmonds.

"Oh, there could be nothing nicer!" cried Kathryn, springing to her feet and giving Annie a genuine hug.

"I do insist," said Lady Hawren, "that you both do go, if only for a visit of a year or two, with us."

"Oh, Cousin Annie," said Kathryn, "I cannot leave you here; you and dear Mrs. Edmonds! Oh, you must go!"

"Darling child," replied Mrs. Edmonds, "I should be delighted to do so. Would not you like a visit to England, Annie?"

"Indeed, I should; it would be grand!"

"But," said Mrs. Edmonds, "I have promised my sister to spend Christmas with her in Paris."

"Why, we cannot possibly get away from Paris before Christmas," said Lady Hawren. "I expect to spend Christmas with my uncle, Count Dubois-Raymond, then start immediately after for Liverpool."

"Then, Lady Hawren, I promise conditionally to go with you," said Mrs. Edmonds; "that is, if you will permit me to continue to instruct Kathryn in her music. I insist upon this, as I know I should be better contented. I must have something to occupy my mind."

"Oh, dear friend, I would deem it the greatest privilege to have you under any condition! Oh, I shall be charmed——"

"Lady Hawren," said Annie, "you remember Cousin Hugh Drysdale, the present Governor?"

"Oh, certainly; I remember him well. He was one of our best friends. I was grieved to hear of the death of his wife, though I never met her."

"Yes, she has been dead something over a year. His mother lives with him, but has feeble health, and is not capable of directing affairs at the mansion; so her cousin, Miss Elizabeth Macelrath, is looked upon as, and is, in reality, mistress of the mansion. Cousin Hugh is so good to her, and gives her liberty to have everything her own way, and I can assure you she manages in fine style, and gives the most superb dinners, the grandest suppers and balls! Some think he will marry her, but I do not."

"Yes, Annie, I know; my husband and I looked upon him as one of our best friends. I always thought him very nice."

"Indeed, he is nice," said Mrs. Edmonds. "By the

way, you will meet him; he is to dine with us this evening."

"It is over two years since I saw him," said Lady Hawren.

"Oh, I remember him!" exclaimed Kathryn; "he was just a darling man, and I did love him, for he would romp and play with Ned and me so nicely, and said he had no little girl or boy of his own to play with."

"Look out, now, Kate," said Annie; "he's a nice widower; you should be careful how you love him."

"Oh, you look out, Miss Annie; I shall love him, anyhow. Now I am going to get up and dress; I am no longer tired."

Mrs. Edmonds rang for the maids, who soon appeared.

"Vinie, attend Miss Kathryn, there in the adjoining room. Amelé, you can wait on Lady Hawren, here, when she requires your services."

Amelé was Mrs. Edmonds' own French maid, whom she resigned to the use of Lady Hawren during her stay. The maid who was to attend Kathryn was a negro girl about eighteen. Annie and Vinie both went to work to get Kathryn ready, and soon had her dressed. Then Annie conducted her downstairs.

"Oh, Lady Hawren," cried Mrs. Edmonds, after the others had gone, "I feel that I must go with you. I must have something to occupy my time. How hard it is for me to live without something to keep my mind from the dreadful reality of this life, to keep me from brooding over the past! I must have a change, and must be employed."

"Dear Emily, you know how glad we will be to have you with us. And also know that I can sympathize with you in your sorrow; to lose the dear companion of one's life is hard to bear."

"Oh, but if my husband had died at home, surrounded by comforts that loving hands could give, I could at least have had the satisfaction of caring for him in his last moments, as had you, when your husband died; but poor Harry was left on the battlefield, wounded, with no one near to offer him one word of comfort. This, dear Lady Hawren, is agonizing to me to think on."

"There, now, Emily, dry your tears; you must indeed make your arrangements to go with us to England."

"I will do it, Lady Hawren; I will go with you!"

"Dear Kathryn," said Annie, as they went down the broad stairway, "I shall die of ennui if I am left here, for I do believe Mrs. Edmonds intends going with you, and brother is to be married next week. He will no longer need me as the mistress of his house; so I will, with his consent, make my arrangements to go with you, if Mrs. Edmonds goes, and remain—ah, no telling how long!"

"Oh, do, dear Annie; I shall be delighted, and we will be so glad to have you with us on the voyage! And after we get to Fleetwood we will see so many sights."

"Then, if brother is willing, I shall go."

A handsome man was entering the hall as they reached the foot of the stairway—apparently about forty, neither tall nor short, but of medium height and size, with a gentlemanly bearing and a fine intellectual face.

"Oh, Cousin Hugh," cried Annie, "here is your little friend, Kathryn Arranton; see, she has grown to almost a woman!"

"Ah, my little friend," he cried, "how glad am I to meet you again!" And they shook hands warmly. He offered each an arm, and they promenaded up and down the hall in lively conversation. "How you have

grown, my dear! Why, you are as large now as Annie, every bit—larger, some, than your mother, I suspect. How is her health—and did you enjoy coming through the country to-day?”

A little later, with arms twined around each other, Mrs. Edmonds and Lady Hawren descended the stairway. Lord Drysdale, with the young ladies, advanced to meet them. He greeted Lady Hawren with a look of profound admiration. Her face possessed the rare beauty of the southern clime, her color was heightened by excitement, occasioned by the conversation she had just held with Emily; her soft, hazel eyes sparkled like diamonds, and her coral lips spoke a joyous greeting, as he seized her delicate hand with a warm pressure.

We leave them standing, all conversing together, in the great hall, while we hearken to the conversation carried on between Mr. Barry and Mr. Crowningshield in the drawing-room.

“Mr. Barry,” said Mr. Crowningshield, “my mother was a Barry, and I was named for her family. Where were your people from, please, sir?”

“Why, my dear sir, my father was born in Liverpool nearly a hundred years ago,” replied he.

“Ah, really!” exclaimed Mr. Crowningshield. “Perhaps, then, we are related. Had he a brother, or brothers, sir?”

“Yes, sir; he had two brothers, who, so far as I know, always lived in Liverpool; one, James W. Barry, and the other, Samuel.”

“What was the W. for in your uncle’s name, Mr. Barry?”

“Wyckliffe; James Wyckliffe was his name. His mother was a Wyckliffe, sir. He was a partner in the firm of Wyckliffe & Barry.”

“Then, Mr. Barry, your uncle, James W. Barry, was my own grandfather; my mother was his youngest

daughter, and my Christian name is for my grandfather, Barry."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Barry. "Then your mother is my own cousin? It must be so! Then, my dear Mr. Crowningshield, we are related." The men rose simultaneously and clasped each other's hand with great warmth. Edwin rose also, and, shaking Mr. Crowningshield's hand, said:

"I am delighted, my dear Mr. Crowningshield, to find that you are related to my dear guardian."

"Thank you, Edwin," he said; "I am delighted, myself, at the dénouement."

"Well, well!" said Mr. Barry. "To think that you should prove to be a relative of mine! You are the first one I have ever seen."

"Your father came to this country many years ago, then, Mr. Barry."

"Yes, yes! While England has yet under the rule of the Lord Protector, many of the King's followers fled to Virginia. Among them my father—the Washingtons, Jeffersons, Lees, Randolphs, and a number of other aristocratic families, who fled to save their lives. I have never seen any of my father's relations, having been born in this country."

Now the ladies entered the room; Lady Hawren, with Governor Lord Drysdale; Kathryn and Annie, arm in arm; Mrs. Edmonds following with Robert Hamilton, Annie's brother, who had but just arrived to dine with the party.

Then Mr. Barry delighted them with an explanation of the relationship existing between himself and Mr. Crowningshield.

Mr. Crowningshield said to Mrs. Edmonds: "Then you and I are also related, are we not?"

"Yes, yes, surely; we are cousins, several times removed."

"Just an interesting relationship. May I not then call you cousin?"

"Yes, oh, yes; certainly, sir!" she said, smiling sweetly on him.

"Oh, how delighted am I to claim you for a cousin, Mrs. Edmonds—Cousin Emily!" he said.

Dinner was then announced, and, offering her his arm, they followed the others to a splendid dining hall, where Mrs. Barry did the honors of the table in a queenly manner.

After dinner the evening was spent in pleasant conversation.

Lord Drysdale and Lady Hawren enjoyed a pleasant talk of bygone days, then engaged in an interesting game of whist with Mr. and Mrs. Barry, while Mr. Crowningshield and his cousin, Emily, and the others rendered some fine music. Annie favored them with some artistic solos, bringing into execution her marvelously melodious voice, which had received training from best masters of Paris.

Next morning Mr. Crowningshield and Edwin took Mrs. Edmonds, Annie and Kathryn out for a long drive over the city and some distance in the country. Lady Hawren had declined to accompany them, saying:

"I feel that it will be better for me to rest this morning, for all my strength will be required in making preparation for the voyage awaiting us."

Kathryn kissed her good-bye, then ran with Edwin out to the carriage, so young and full of life.

"They are so happy!" said Lady Hawren, as they rolled away, speaking to Amelé and Vinie, who stood with her in the hall.

"Ah, Miladi should haf gone viz zem; dey vil haf mudge pleasure!" said Amelé.

"Yes," said Lady Hawren, "they will enjoy it, I am sure; but I wish to sit and read a while, and it is rather cold for me to go out."

She turned into the library and, selecting a volume she wished to read, seated herself in a great soft chair near a window. Vinie placed an Ottoman under her feet, then stirred up the fire in the grate.

"Throw something over my shoulders, Vinie, till the room gets warmer. I wish to sit here by the window."

"Yes, ma'am," returned Vinie; and she went into the hall and, taking down a light-blue shawl, started with it; but Amelé, who stood regarding Lady Hawren with admiring gaze, turned, and, on seeing Vinie take down the blue shawl, snatched it from her hand, saying in a low voice:

"Oh, Mon Dieu! Would you spoil zee pretty picture? Oh, you heathen! Ma foi! Here, led me show you. Thees delicate pink scarf will be more appropriate vis miladi's complegsion and blag costume. Stand bag, Vinie, I vill do id." And softly she glided up to Lady Hawren, who was by this time deeply interested in her volume, "*Arte of English Poesie*," and lightly spread the lovely scarf over her Ladyship's shoulders, deftly tucking it in here and there; then, with rare taste for the beautiful, drew a soft fluffy corner of it up quite over the back of her Ladyship's coiffure. Contrasting with her dark hair, the effect was fine, relieving the sombre robe, and casting a rich halo around her pretty head, when the gracious lady with her book, oblivious of what was taking place around her, glanced up and smiled her thanks to Amelé, saying simply:

"*Il est suffisant, Amelé.*"

Amelé left the room, but stood in the hall looking back with admiration on the picture of loveliness.

"Oh, ma beauté! Miladi *elle est charmant!*" she cried, and, turning to Vinie, who still stood near looking on, said:

"And thou, *bête noir*, wouldst have spoiled this loveliness with that blue—— Out upon you, heathen Vinie!"

Vinie grinned from ear to ear; Amelé picked up the broom which Vinie had been using, and, taking after her, they both went scudding down the hall, laughing merrily.

The romping maids had not more than gone out of sight when Lord Drysdale came quietly up the steps. Seeing no one in the hall—for Vinie had been left there instead of the footman, who had gone with the carriage—and being on perfectly familiar terms with the family, he hung up his greatcoat and hat, then thought he would step into the library until someone should come. At the doorway he paused on beholding the lovely picture presented to his view.

Lady Hawren heard a footfall and, without raising her eyes, asked:

"What is it, Vinie?"

His Lordship drew up quite near in front of her, then said:

"Your Ladyship will pardon my intrusion? I beg a thousand pardons. Am sorry to interrupt your pleasant occupation."

She looked up and met his enraptured gaze. And so startled was she that the "*Arte of English Poesie*" tumbled onto the carpet.

Gallantly he picked up the volume. She attempted to rise, to make him a curtsy, as was the custom, but he was so near that she found she could not do so gracefully. He said:

"Pray do not rise, do not move! I will sit here."

Seating himself opposite, as she had not yet spoken, he said:

"Can you pardon the intrusion, or must I sue on bended knee?"

She, usually so self-possessed, was a little flurried, and sank back in her chair, exclaiming:

"No, no! I assure you, the interruption is most agreeable, as I am left alone this morning for a little while. Mrs. Barry has been hastily summoned to the bedside of a friend who is quite ill, and the others have gone driving."

"Then I am glad I dropped in, though my presence may not prove so agreeable to you as a good book."

"Oh, my Lord, you force me to own that I am charmed to have you for company."

"Thank you! Most humbly do I thank you for the kind assurance. Has it yet been determined at what time you will embark?"

"Oh, yes, my Lord; Mr. Crowningshield ascertained this morning that a vessel will leave port for Havre in three days, and has engaged passage for our party. And oh, my Lord, do you know that dear Mr. Barry this morning decided to accompany us as far as Liverpool to visit his relatives, and the ladies have fully determined to go with me to Fleetwood. Will it not be pleasant for Kathryn and me to have them with us?"

"Indeed it will, dear Lady Hawren! But here I am forced to remain for three long years more—until the expiration of my term of office. This is too hard on me, when I should so much enjoy being one of your party, and I do pine for my dear native land."

"You love England, then, my Lord?"

"Oh, how dearly, but must perforce remain, when I so much wish to go. Of what a great happiness I am deprived! Three years—three long, miserable years must elapse ere I shall be permitted to see you again," said his Lordship, devouring her with his eyes.

"But, my Lord, it is an honorable position you hold here; you should be proud, rather, to hold it."

"Dear Lady Hawren, you speak patronizingly, as though I were a lad, and you my tutor; but I do assure you it will be—to me, at least—a miserable three years."

"I beg your pardon, my Lord; surely it will not be so bad. How far is it from Drysdale to Fleetwood—I mean, do you know anything of my grandfather, and do you know about Fleetwood and of the country around?" she asked, deftly trying to change the subject.

"How shall I answer so many questions—begin at the last and go back, or begin with the first, my Lady?"

"My Lord, as you like."

"'Tis nearly a good day's drive to Fleetwood from my château, as I choose to call my manor house, and when I *do* get back may I not come to Fleetwood—may I?" He looked straight into her bright, hazel eyes, until the long, fringed lids drooped over them.

"Oh, yes, my Lord; we will be very glad to see you—to have you visit us." Her face was very rosy, and she was surpassingly lovely. "But—but I was asking you about my grandfather and his surroundings. Will you not, my Lord, tell me something of him? You must know him, having lived so near."

"Yes, dear Lady, I know him well, and also the two young lords, his grandsons."

"Brothers, my Lord?"

"No; cousins, my Lady." Thus they talked on till Mrs. Barry came.

Phyllis and Silas arrived next day. Heavy cloaks, shawls, furs, and hoods for the voyage were procured, trunks were packed, and by evening all was in readiness for the start on the morrow.

With evening came a number of guests, who had been invited to dine with them; and after dinner there was music, many old-time games, and much happiness. Yet there were some sad hearts.

Lord Drysdale and Kathryn had been promenading in the great hall. Leading her back to the drawing-room, his Lordship placed her beside her mother on a sofa and seated himself in front of them. Taking her

hand in his, he drew from his vest pocket a finely carved gold ring, set with a bright sparkling ruby; he placed it on her finger, saying:

"My dear little friend, if your mother does not object, I wish you to wear this little ring as a token of friendship which, I trust, may always exist between us, and as a reminder of the happy days past, when you and Edwin were children, and I, having no children of my own, took so much delight in romping with you."



CHAPTER V.

EMBARKATION.

"Be true, ye winds of ocean, and thou maiden sea,
Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope."

ALL were now ready. The hour of embarkation drew near, the baggage had been sent aboard. Besides the Barry carriage, the Governor's grand coach-and-six stood at the door, ready to convey the ladies and Mr. Crowningshield to the pier. Enveloped in long cloaks, they were seated with Lord Drysdale in his coach. Mr. Barry, with his wife and Edwin, who were going to see them off; Amelé, Phyllis, and Elsie, Annie's maid, went in his own carriage. His own body-servant and Mr. Crowningshield's attendants had gone on with the luggage.

The Swan, the great sailing vessel which was to bear them across the broad Atlantic, stood at anchor, her white sails flapping in the wind, as if impatient to be off.

Many people stood on the strand to watch the passengers as they went over the gangway to the great deck, which appeared to be already filled. Now all

were aboard; the Governor and Edwin had accompanied them. They made a tour of inspection through the elegant staterooms, and, finding them all that could be desired, returned to the deck, where farewells were spoken.

A little to one side stood Lady Hawren and Lord Drysdale.

"What a pleasure it would afford me to make one of your party, Lady Hawren. You can never know how discomfited you leave me," he said, taking her hand to say farewell. "You must go, while I am forced to remain. You do not realize how madly I——"

"True, my Lord; I must use all haste to my grandfather, who has sent for me. He is quite feeble; and I feel that I should use all diligence to reach his side, or I may never be permitted to see him."

"May I ask of you, my Lady, one little promise, ere you leave me for so long a time? Just a little promise; it will not, I think, be a burden for you to keep."

"Oh, no, no, my Lord! Do not—or, how can I say, without first knowing what it is you would ask?" she said, all in a tremor.

"You will promise, will you not?" he said, holding her hand closely imprisoned. "Only promise that you will not marry before I shall see you again, three years hence."

"Oh, my Lord, I can—I do promise *that*, readily," she replied, her face all crimson.

"I thank your Ladyship for this little promise," he said. "May God's blessings abide with and keep you always." He gallantly raised her hand to his lips. Their eyes met in a mutual, thrilling glance, and, though no words were spoken, eye spoke love to eye, and heart stood revealed to heart.

Drawing his hat down over his eyes, he passed on, shook hands with the other friends, wishing them a pleasant voyage, went on shore, entered his coach, the

footman closed the door, and the Governor was driven to his mansion.

This was Edwin's first parting from Lady Hawren and Kathryn, and he was much affected. But Mr. Barry and Lady Hawren promised him that next year he should go to England and be placed in college there for the future.

The heavy sails began to fill, the huge old ship quivered and trembled; our party leaned over the bulwarks, waving adieux to friends on the pier. A farewell gun was fired, *The Swan* turned gracefully, moved slowly at first, then went scudding along over a smooth sea, gliding gently on in her course.

This voyage was greatly enjoyed, and proved one of the shortest ever made up to that time, for in about five weeks they disembarked at Havre. Vehicles were procured for the journey to Paris. The ladies were placed in a splendid coach, where they found themselves quite comfortable. Stopping the first night in the old historic city of Rouen, they had time for a pleasant walk.

They walked on the Boulevard along the river, and had pointed out to them many old and interesting objects, among them the old Cathedral—a Gothic structure of great beauty, containing, besides a number of other interesting monuments, the tomb of Richard Coeur de Lion. The Church of St. Ouen, built in the fourteenth century, and considered one of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture. In the Place de la Pucelle they saw a statue of the Maid of Orleans, who was burnt there in 1431, and many other fine monuments.

The trip to Sainte Denis was made next day, where they were met by the Count Dubois-Raymond, with his sumptuous family coach and splendidly liveried attendants.

The six-mile drive from Sainte Denis to the city

was delightful. Lady Hawren and Kathryn were driven far up the aristocratic Avenue des Champs Elysées, to the splendid Hôtel, or city residence of Count Dubois-Raymond.

Mr. Crowningshield was very much occupied with business, and the other members of the party went for a visit with their relations during the stay of two or three weeks in the city. As the time was limited, it would be mostly spent in preparation for their trip to North England. It was necessary that they should have magnificent wardrobes made up, and what with procuring a French teacher for Kathryn and waiting maids and other attendants suitable for her retinue, Lady Hawren was kept busily engaged most of the time. Yet the Christmas festivities were celebrated in fine style, and they seemed to enjoy no end of pleasures.

The Dubois-Raymonds were solicitous to have them spend the entire season with them, promising many social pleasures, for the Countess was a leader in the literary as well as in the social circle, and in her sumptuous drawing-rooms were gathered, evening after evening, the gay social or literary coterie.

Lady Hawren was immovable, being anxious to reach Fleetwood. Knowing the feebleness and uncertainty of life of one of her grandfather's age, she felt that she must hasten to him as early as possible. Then there was danger of rough seas and shipwrecks if they waited later in the season. They determined to sail from Havre to Liverpool, looking on this route as preferable to an overland trip by coach from London to Carlisle; besides, Mr. Crowningshield wished not only to take Mr. Barry to visit his people, but desired that the whole party should stop at least one night with his father's family.

The Count, on their arrival in Paris, introduced to Lady Hawren a lad about fourteen years of age, say-

ing: "This, my dear Louise, is your own cousin, my sister's son, Julien Gainsford; his father was an Englishman, and he, like Ajax, being a blended knight, half Trojan and half Greek, knows not which side to espouse. He sometimes declares for France, then again is English out and out. But I believe if put to the test he would be neither half-hearted nor half-handed, but would go whole-souled for whichever side he did espouse."

"I believe, my Lord, if I might take him to England, I might make a good Englishman of him," said Lady Hawren.

"His father was in the English service in India, where he died when the lad was about ten years old, and I went to fetch his mother and him; but before I reached Bombay she also died and left the poor child alone. I have kept him in school since, and I can assure you he is a bright scholar, Louise," said the count.

Lady Hawren was not long in discovering that Julien was indeed a bright lad, and had a great desire to visit England; so she proposed to take him in her train, as her own page. Julien gladly consented to this, and his uncle did not oppose him.

Lady Hawren secured a tutor for Julien; and employed a man to take charge of the luggage, another as common attendant; then after completing their purchases, they again set out for Havre, whence they sailed for Liverpool. In two weeks more they found themselves about sunset in the mouth of the Mersey ready to disembark at Liverpool.

Mr. Crowningshield at once sent a runner to convey the intelligence of their arrival, then secured a carriage for the ladies, and when they drew up at the residence of the elder Mr. Crowningshield, the mansion was ready lighted up in anticipation of the visitors and the son, who had been so long away across the great ocean.

The great doors were thrown open and a multitude of servants thronged out to attend them. There was a tender meeting between Barry Crowningshield and his parents, his two sisters, and a pretty cousin. Then Mr. Barry was introduced, and as Barry Crowningshield had written of the intended visit of his new found relation, they were prepared to receive him, which they did with open arms; then the party of ladies were introduced, and met with a most cordial welcome.

Two suites of apartments, beautifully and tastefully furnished, were set apart for the use of the ladies; there were two lovely dressing rooms with cozy fire grates. The maids were furnished a sleeping apartment in the suite of rooms with Madame Foque, the French teacher; Phyllis and Elsie were also cared for, while Julien and the men were placed in a hotel near by.

After a sumptuous dinner, the evening was spent in animated and interesting conversation and music. Then our party retired early, in order to be ready in the morning to begin a something over two days' journey in a heavy, slow-going stage coach.



CHAPTER VI.

THE JOURNEY—A MEETING—YOUNG LOVE'S FIRST LESSON.

THE stage or road coach of this day was strong and well built. The ladies were placed inside; on the first seat, their backs to the driver, sat Miss Hamilton and Kathryn; on the next, Lady Hawren and Mrs. Edmonds, while Madame and Hortense, Lady Haw-

ren's new maid, occupied the back seat. The old coach went lumbering along the highway, followed by the hackney-coach with the attendants and the luggage.

Mr. Crowningshield and Julien, mounted on fleet-footed horses, rode gracefully along, sometimes beside the coach conversing pleasantly with the ladies and pointing out objects of interest, or dashing ahead; at other times following behind the hackney coach.

They stopped at a wayside inn for a noon meal and found most excellent accommodation, and bespoke a fine dinner and elegant rooms for the ladies.

At the gentle hour of twilight the rumbling old coach drew up at the inn. A group of men and boys of different classes stood around to watch the passengers descend from the coach. The ladies entered the parlor, followed by the eyes of the gazing multitude. There was a glowing fire on the hearth, and being a little cold, they drew up and sat for awhile around the fire before going to their several apartments to prepare for dinner.

A sensation had been created by the arrival of so many beautiful American ladies; a great interest was manifested, and by the time dinner was announced, many more persons gathered in, all on the *qui vive*, with open eyes and gaping mouths, to see them pass into the dining-room.

The ladies thought: "Truly this inn is well patronized." Entering the coach, they were soon on the way again, unconscious of the great interest they had excited.

Although the morning was cold, they were quite comfortable in the coach with their luxurious wraps and robes. Presently Hortense laughed out merrily:

"What now, Hortense?" asked Lady Hawren.

"Oh, Miladi; I vas mudge amuse!"

"Why, Hortense, what can be so very amusing to you, as to occasion you so much mirth, when the rest of us, it seems to me, are rather serious?" asked Kathryn.

"Pray tell us," said Annie, "and let us join you in your mirth."

"Oh, Mam'sell—Mees—vair many shentlehommes were deesappoint dees morning at de een, you call him?"

"Yes, inn, Hortense. How was that?" asked Annie.

"Zey were vair mudge charme to zee so mudge beautiful Merican ladees last eefning; dey vish to zee dem again dees morning, ad breakfast, and zee dem entare de statch-cooch."

"How know you this?" asked Lady Hawren.

"Miladi, ze fille de chambre telled me zhust pefore leaving, zee shentlehommes sed oop-oop-ah!—*Toute le nuit*—what you call eem?"

"All night," corrected Annie.

"Ees, ees, all zee nide roon ze fire; dere was nod nuff beds in zee een for all zem, zey haf sed oop roon zee fire; if zey goed ome zey vould nod zee Merican ladees entare zee dining-room, and entare zee statch-cooch."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Annie, "sat up all night around the fire!"

"People who live in the vicinity, I suppose," said Mrs. Edmonds, "and maybe not accustomed to see many ladies."

"Oh!" said Kathryn; I am glad I had my face closely veiled."

"So had we all," replied Annie.

"Zat ees eet! zey was deespoint so," said Hortense, laughing.

"Did any one ever hear of such a piece of impudence and folly?" said Mrs. Edmonds.

"It is well enough they were disappointed," said Annie.

"I am glad they were!" exclaimed Kathryn, indignantly, "I am not going about over this country for a show; and will hereafter keep my veil more closely drawn than ever."

"See that you do, darling," said Lady Hawren, with a gentle smile at the indignation displayed by the girls.

There was this morning an addition to their number—a Scotchman on the seat with the driver—a voluble man who was well acquainted with the scenes along the way, and pointed out to them many places of interest, when Mr. Crowningshield happened to be in advance or in the rear. When noon began to draw near, Mr. Crowningshield and the page set off in a gallop and ordered a fine repast for them by the time the coach should arrive. And after enjoying the repast and a little much-needed rest, they again took their seats in the coach and resumed the journey.

Mr. Crowningshield, now riding alongside the coach, said to Miss Annie: "Miss Hamilton, we now enter upon the extensive grounds of your cousin, Lord Drysdale, embracing the beautiful Lake Windemere."

"Yes? is that Lake Windemere we can now see gleaming in the distance on our left?"

"Yes, that is the lovely lake; and you will later have a fine view of the Manor House, or Drysdale Château, as it is called, also a better view of the lake. The château is beautifully situated on the head of Lake Windemere; we will stop over night just a few miles beyond, at Ambleside Inn, on Lord Drysdale's premises. You can now see the turrets and gables of the Manor House at a distance."

"Yes, yes! thank you Mr. Crowningshield, it will afford me great pleasure to have a good view of Cousin Hugh's place of nativity."

While Mr. Crowningshield and Annie were conversing on the left, Kathryn was getting restless.

"Mother," she said, it is getting quite warm in here; will you not allow Hortense to drop this window for me, that I also may have a view of the scenery? Remember, *ma mère*, I was never before in Merrie England, and so much wish to look upon the beauties of nature."

"Certainly daughter; only be careful you do not get cold."

While Mrs. Edmonds and Annie were having a fine talk with Mr. Crowningshield, and Madame and Hortense were jabbering French in the back of the coach, the road began to be rough, and he was forced to drop behind.

"Oh!" exclaimed Annie, as she was thrown with nearly all her weight onto Kathryn.

"Annie!" cried Kathryn, "if you do not stop pitching on me, I shall shove you out this window——."

Just then the coach with a sudden lurch threw Kathryn quite into the arms of Annie. "Oh, Kathryn!" cried Lady Hawren reprovingly.

"This is a steepy, break-neck road," observed Mrs. Edmonds, who was in vain trying to keep her seat.

"Never mind Kathryn!" said Annie: "if you had received the fierce encounter that my poor head has met with, against this upright, back here, you would be wishing someone would put you out," said Annie, with a rueful countenance, vigorously rubbing the back of her head.

"This road should be called the rocky highway," observed Mrs. Edmonds.

"Oh!" cried Annie, as if frightened, "do not speak of the highway; it suggests to my mind the daring highway robbers who infest this part of the world."

"I think it would lend at least a little variety to the scene," said Kathryn, "to have a handsome highway-

man dash up and demand, 'Your money or your lives.' It would relieve the monotony, which is becoming irksome."

"Oh, *Ciel!*" exclaimed Madame, from the rear.

"Eh! Madame; are you so very much afraid of highwaymen?" asked Kate.

"Oh, Mon Dieu! ma petite, do you vish dat ve should all 'ave our troads cud? Oh, *Ciel!*" cried Madame in terror.

"You know," said Annie, with a sly wink at Kathryn," that these highways are infested with bold and skilful robbers."

"Oh, yes; mounted on fine horses, and wearing broad hats with plumes and magnificent cloaks, and daggers, and pistols, Madame," continued Kathryn, addressing the French teacher.

"Oh, *Ciel!* ef dose highway-mans zhould dash oop vid dose pistolees—Oh——oo!" she screamed.

"*Et les couteaux!*" exclaimed Hortense, also terrified at the thought.

"In times past, it is said, many of them were men of good families, well educated and perfect gentlemen in manners; yet were a terror to all men," said Mrs. Edmonds, placidly.

"It appears, though, that their vivacious gallantry won the hearts of all women," returned Annie.

"And they were to be seen on every highway and main road; and, of course, we'll meet some before our journey is done," said Kathryn; "they are said to be dextrous with their swords and pistols."

"*Sancta Maria*, save us from dese highway-mans!" cried Madame.

"Oh, Madame," said Kathryn, "they never hurt ladies; but only ride up, and in the most courtly manner demand your purse, or your jewels; and mayhap he would suffer you to redeem these, by dancing a *coranto* with him on the heath."

"*Ma foi!* to thing of danzing vid a highway-mans. Oh, miladi; I zould die, me—mais if ee vas a shentlehomme, dat es different; to danze vid a shentlehomme," said Hortense shrugging her shoulders. "Ah, vid de pistoles and *le grand couteau!*" cried Madame. "*Vraiment! non, non!*"

Now the road was smoother and they dashed out on an open plain.

It was growing late, and Mr. Crowningshield and Julien cantered on to order dinner and secure rooms at the inn. They were all getting tired enough to rest. Kathryn removed her hood and veil and lounged back among the cushions and soft wraps. Now she hears a noise as of someone approaching from behind; and suddenly thrusts her head out to see what it might be, for they were all thoroughly awake to all that transpired, everything being novel and strange to them. Leaning out of the window as far as she well could, with an expectant look on her face, her hair dishevelled, and falling in golden-brown showers over her shoulders, she suddenly came face to face with two cavaliers. Encountering the full gaze of the two knights, she drew back, with a crimson face.

Raising their plumed hats, the knights bowed to their saddle-bows; and as they were going in the same direction with the coach, they were some time in passing, and thus had good opportunity to observe the inmates.

These were followed by two gallant squires, no doubt aspirants for the golden spurs of knighthood. Four men followed these, bearing the arms of the knights and leading the sumpter mules; one held on high a pennon, gracefully streaming in the gentle breeze. Hard after came twenty sturdy yeomen, well-armed, wearing a uniform of dark-green cloth, black silk hose and low shoes.

Now, Kathryn had, while the knights were passing the coach, ample time to observe their dress, especially that of the knight who rode slowly along next to the coach, by her side as it were, for some distance. In the first place he rode a magnificent black charger; the ample folds of the knightly housings were of fine crimson velvet richly embroidered and fringed with gold. A cloak of fine cloth, with crimson lining, fastened on the left shoulder with a brooch set with brilliants, hung gracefully about his superb figure, almost concealing his person. The plumage from his hat curled charmingly over a mass of sunny curls which lay upon his shapely shoulders. He carried himself with majestic grace. His riding cloak falling away in front, displayed an ivory-mouthed bugle at his side, richly carved. Between three bugle-horns richly embroidered on the breast of his coat there appeared a ferocious-looking beast, skulking, vulnerated in the neck by a broken spear; and the same figure appeared on the pennon, also on the breast of each of his men. This knight of the golden locks spoke kindly to the driver and to the worthy Scot beside him, who it appears was one of his retainers. To the latter he said:

"So you are getting back towards home, I see, Mr. Maclain"; his voice in rich accents fell on Kathryn's ear like music, welcome and grateful.

"Aye, aye! me Laird," replied the Scot, "and its glad I am to be getting that ways; for there's nae place for tha gude mon like 'is ain ingle neuk.'" After they had all passed, the Scot said to the driver, in a voice the ladies could distinctly hear:

"Ah, mon! there rides tha bonniest Laird that lives i' auld Scotia te-day, and there be mony a Laird i' Scotland, too, but niver ae other like to yon. Aye, he's an ither kynde to the auld Laird wha's dead noo, some six month syne. Aye, tha auld Laird was that

close noo; belaved in hauding wat ee ad, and letting eke ane take care o'himsel. He leted tha puir tenants live i' tha hovels, and taked a' tha rents ee could o' them, puir sauls. His sister, puir leedy, ad married ae Leftenant i' tha armie, some fifteen years syne, mebbie it was, thae auld Laird was that mad ee would niver 'ave any thing to do wi' her mair, til tha Leftenant was killed i' tha battle; then tha puir leedy war left alone, save for thae wee laddie, her bairn. Finally tha Laird, seeing ee was er own brither, fetchit her wi' her bairn to live i' tha auld castle, but ye weel ken he was that close ee ad dismissed a' tha servants, tha ousekeeper and a' save tha auld steward and is wife, to do a' tha work abune tha great auld castle; then putit is own sister to keepin 'ouse to spare expenses. The puir leedy ad been bringit up like a princess 'erself, but noo she maun take tha place of 'ousekeeper, and ee saving money a' tha wiles. But ee died, ee did; and ye sould see tha differ noo, tha castle fu' o' servants to do er biddink and tha puir laddie bairn, dressed i' gret style, 'as a tootor noo, like a laird's son, and is noo page to me Laird, him but noo passing by. Him a bit behing tha Laird, on the white palfrey sae fine. Aye, ee's page to me Laird o' Weirwolf. Aye, things be differ noo; thae money tha auld laird saved up goes free enou' now; the tenants' 'oouses a' repairit. A' is differ noo. But ae wilfu mor maun hae his way!"

The ladies all had some remarks to make on the knights and their attendants. Kathryn listened attentively to what was said; then, drawing a long breath, she spoke as if just aroused from a brown study:

"Mother, when do you think you will finish that bit o' lace you are doing for my bridal corsage?"

Lady Hawren looked demure.

"What think you, ladies," continued Kathryn, with

sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks; "mother is knitting on a piece of lace which she says is designed to adorn my bridal bodice. She learned the art in St. Catharine's Convent School in Paris. She made good progress for awhile, but now I begin to suspect that she is resorting to Penelope's artifice in order to gain time on me and hold me single till on the verge of old-maid-hood—but her finesse will do her no good; for oh! I have found my knight! I have met my fate!"

"Oh," said Annie, "do you claim the knight of the golden locks?"

"Oh, yes; indeed, I do! He's my knight."

From the inn that night Mr. Crowningshield sent an express to Fleetwood Castle, by way of a short cut through the country, to notify Mr. Cadwalader Langhorn, the old seneschal or high steward, that they would be in Carlisle next day noon, and to send the family coach to meet them, as Fleetwood lay full ten miles to the left of Carlisle, off the stage route.

Next morning their route lay in a mountainous region. A high mountain lay to their left, a beautiful lake of water to their right.

Mr. Crowningshield rode alongside and said:

"Ladies, see that long lake lying toward yonder mountain?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" they cried.

"That is Ullswater; and this high point you see to the left is Mount Helvellyn. We now cross the bridge of Clifton and enter on the confines of an estate belonging to Lord Clifton, a grandson of the noble Lord of Fleetwood; we then come to the Pass of Dunmailraise, and will pass the monument of Dunmail, the last King of Cumberland. Away in the distance to the left you see the high point called Saddle-back."

How they enjoyed the scenery among the hills and lakes of Cumberland! Along Eamont's winding way,

crossing Eden River, they pass through Kirkoswald's verdant plain and over Ithring's mead; through Penryth on to Carlisle, where they arrived a little after noon and had ample time for a good rest, which was much appreciated by the ladies. Presently the coach-and-six from Fleetwood drew up, followed by a numerous retinue—postillions, outriders, and footmen, all in livery. These were soon followed by a large road wagon for the luggage and servants.

Entering the lovely old coach 'mid its luxurious furnishings of furs and soft cushions, the ladies found themselves much more comfortable than they had been in the old stagecoach, and, though the air was cold and crisp, they found the ten-mile drive most delightful. The way led through a fine old forest, the mighty trees here and there making a canopy overhead by the interlacing of their branches. At a great distance now they were able to see the castle, which was pointed out to them by Mr. Crowningshield, ambling along beside the coach. It appeared to be surrounded by a forest, for only here and there could be seen the points of turrets, the main tower, and the donjon. Again the view is changed; the castle appears to be situated upon a high cliff, altogether inaccessible; then here they were confronted by a winding river.

Turning to the left and winding down this small river, they soon come to a crossing. Rattling over the pretty rustic bridge, they enter a long lane; a strong stone wall on the right enclosed a beautiful park, while on the left lay the valley farmlands of Fleetwood, dotted here and there with cottages; a picturesque village lay in front of them, about three miles distant. Turning in at a pair of great gates on the right, fronting the castle, they had a fine view of the place, with the great battlemented walls frowning down on them.

An immense entrance was protected by two round towers of great strength. Above this on the barbican

tower a shield was cut in the stone, and from a high turret floated in graceful folds a banner bearing the arms of the noble Earl of Fleetwood. The great round towers had been built as a protection against the resentment of enemies. In them were to be seen traces of Saxon workmanship. The castle itself was built of granite, in the old baronial style, and presented the appearance of an ancient fortress formed into a residence replete with all the luxuries and splendors of the time. The towers rose to a great height, especially the great square tower in the centre, under which was the Great Court or Hall of State. They dashed up the long avenue of fine beech-trees to the drawbridge, which now lay in permanent rest over the dry moat, the country being secure from the invasion of all foes by the peace and prosperity which reigned throughout the land.

Entering the great gate, they passed under the portcullis hanging high overhead. The old porter sat by the door of the lodge, fast asleep on duty. He had thrown wide the great gates and sat down to await the coming of the expected guests, but sleep had overtaken his weary eyes. Inside, on either hand, stood two forest giants, like sylvan sentinels, guarding the entrance. Crossing the courtyard, they drew up in front of a large square tower, beneath which was the great Hall of Entrance, while a martial salute thundered from the ramparts.

They were met by a young man, a little heavy set, with dark hair and eyes, and a heavy moustache. He was not handsome, but commanding in appearance; well groomed, easy and graceful in manner, with a patronizing or egotistic air. He was followed by the high steward and the housekeeper and her daughter, with a retinue of servants at their backs.

"My dear Mr. Crowningshield," exclaimed the young man, wringing the hand of the agent, "how very

glad we are to have you back! And, my dear sir, you are successful this time. My grandfather will be delighted."

"Yes, my Lord; success has at length attended my efforts; and here is your cousin, Lady Hawren, my Lord Graeme," he said, handing her from the coach.

"My dear cousin," he said, looking full into her beautiful face, "how glad I am to receive a relative whom I have so long desired to know! Truly, Crowningshield, you *have* done well."

"And this," said Mr. Crowningshield, "is Lady Kathryn, daughter of your cousin, Lady Hawren."

"Truly, truly, Crowningshield, you have outstripped yourself; you have far surpassed my expectations! And we are cousins, too, are we not, Lady Kathryn?" he exclaimed, noting her youthful beauty.

"Possibly, my Lord Graeme," she returned, "in the third degree." He pressed her hand and devoured her with his eyes.

Then the high steward, Mrs. Macleod, and her daughter, Flora, were introduced to Lady Hawren and Kathryn. Flora was a beautiful blonde, just budding into womanhood, with soft, light curls playing about her rosy cheeks. Mrs. Macleod and Flora led them up a broad flight of steps to the suites of apartments that had been prepared for them, while Mr. Crowningshield assisted the others to alight, and introduced Lord Graeme. Two bright young maids, as near alike as could be, Hilda and Laura, led them away to their apartments.

Lord Graeme led Mr. Crowningshield into a cheery sitting-room to meet the old earl, who was most anxiously awaiting him.

A very old gentleman reclined in an easy-chair; his soft, gray locks lay about his neck. When Mr. Crowningshield entered the old man seized his hand most eagerly and cried:

"Ah, Crowningshield, I knew that you would find her, my daughter's heir, and bring her to me some day! But I have waited long, Crowningshield, and sometimes feared that I should never be permitted to see her after all. And is she truly here?"

"Aye, aye, my Lord; I have found her and have brought her to you. You shall presently see her, for I can assure your lordship she is most anxious to meet you. She is a superb woman, and will meet your highest expectations."

Hastily, Lady Hawren and Kathryn attired themselves to meet their grandfather, their French maids deftly assisting them. Then Flora, the blonde beauty, conducted them to the sumptuous drawing-room, and notified Mr. Crowningshield that the ladies were ready to meet the Earl. Mr. Crowningshield and Lord Graeme conducted them to the old Earl's presence.

"Ah, ma belle cousins!" exclaimed Lord Graeme, as he with Kathryn leaning on his arm followed Mr. Crowningshield and Lady Hawren to the bright sitting-room. "What a glorious acquisition to our family will be a number of bright ladies, all exquisitely beautiful, too"—eagerly scanning her face—"so far as I have criticised."

"Do you then, my Lord, claim to be a connoisseur of beauty?"

"Decidedly I am, my Lady."

The Earl received Lady Hawren with great warmth and emotion, and after embracing her he took her hand in his, saying:

"How thankful I am to the Great Giver of Life that I have been permitted to live to behold your face, dear Lady Hawren! And you are Margaret's granddaughter, and Lady Mary's own daughter! Oh, if Lady Margaret could have lived to see this happy day! But no, child, she has been dead four years."

"My Lord, here is my daughter," she said, drawing

Kathryn up nearer, "Kathryn Arranton." Kathryn threw her arms about his neck. He embraced her and placed his hand upon her head, saying:

"Lady Kathryn, prospective heiress of Hawren, may God's richest blessings rest upon you."

His valet then placed him in his chair, almost exhausted. They gave the ladies chairs close up in front of him, then left them together for a long talk.

"And this, Lady Hawren, is the only child you have?"

"Yes, my Lord; "the only one."

"Oh that she had been a boy and might become my heir, inheriting the title and estates of Fleetwood; but no, the entail would prohibit that! The entailed property goes to the heir male, unworthy though he be. Ah, Clifton, Clifton! Poor boy! How my heart has been crushed within me! Mary, you remember Clifton, the son of my only son, and heir to Fleetwood?"

"Oh, no, grandfather; my name is Louise; your granddaughter Mary was my mother."

"Yes, yes; you are Mary's daughter; she married a French captain and went to Paris. Poor Margaret, her mother, never got over it! She advertised year after year for you, and at last died, thinking that all she had would revert to me, and thus go to Clifton. But it never should have been so. I would have turned the world upside down. I should have sent out agents to search every part of America had you not been found."

"In our wild home in the West," said Kathryn.

"Yes, darling. He is bound to inherit my estates, all that are entailed; there is no help for that. It would not be so if I could help it; but the law of primogeniture gives it to him with the title. He is the only son of my only son, and will be heir in spite of all I can do; and, besides being Lord of Clifton, a fine estate in Westmoreland, inherited from his father, he

has fallen heir, by the unexpected death of an uncle on his mother's side, to a barony in Scotland, on the Esk, some fifty miles away; and by the law of primogeniture would also have inherited the Hawren estates as well if you, Lady Hawren, had not happily been found."

Lady Hawren, to avert his mind from his sorrows, thought to change the subject of conversation by asking:

"Grandfather, how is your health? Can you yet walk around, and do you see without the aid of glasses?"

"I used glasses for years, Mary, but do not now require them; my sight grows better by age. And now I use no stick in my walks, but always lean upon the arm of someone. I have discontinued my strolls in the grounds; it is no longer safe for me to walk out. Gaston says he can protect me from all assaults; but it is too dangerous."

"Gaston is your grandson and heir, is he not?"

"He is my grandson, Mary," mistaking her for his granddaughter, Mary, her mother; "but I am sorry to say he is not my heir. Gaston is the son of my youngest daughter. Perhaps I never told you, Mary; I was twice married. My first wife had but one child, Margaret, your——" He paused to think.

"My grandmother, my Lord; I am Louise, not Mary."

"Yes, Louise, your grandmother was my oldest child; her mother died young and Margaret was all the world to me. But Louis Hawren came to us—he also was a Frenchman and distantly related to Margaret's mother—married Margaret, and took her away to his home in Ayrshire, Scotland, lang syne. My wife died, and I went as a soldier and lived single for twenty years; then at near sixty I married again, a daughter of Sir Reginald Clifton, who was my cousin.

She brought me two children—a son and a daughter. The son of my old age, and idol of my heart, married Lady Ethellind Wynnewood, eldest daughter of the Baron of Weirwolf, a man of great wealth and high renown. I was charmed with this marriage, for it was desirable in every way—a family of Saxon blood, whose ancestry was traced back to the old Saxon kings. Then Marian, my youngest daughter, married a son of old Sir Gaston Graeme, over here at the Hermitage. I should never have chosen a Graeme for a son-in-law, but Marian was determined; and I discovered that they would marry in spite of me. He had no showing for a title, being the youngest son; but I yielded, and she married at home. Poor girl! She died in a few years, leaving an only child—this, my grandson, whom you met, but now Lord Graeme. He has no right to title, save through courtesy.”

“But your son, grandfather; what became of your noble son——”

Here Flora entered to notify Lady Hawren that the dinner hour had arrived, and the Earl said:

“Lady Hawren, I shall remember your question, and to-morrow we will continue the conversation, as I shall retire now, as soon as I have had my dinner, here in this room.”

“Then I will say good-night, grandfather, and will see you again in the morning.” She stooped and kissed his brow.

Kathryn placed her arms around his neck, and, kissing his cheek, said:

“A sweet night’s rest, grandfather.”

“Thank you, darling; thank you!” replied he; and they left the room. They met the old valet just outside the door, returning to his charge; also a page, bearing the Earl’s dinner.

Flora led them to the brilliantly lighted drawing-

room. They noted her well; she was tall and slender, a dimpled blonde, her face was white as china, with exquisite coloring, like a beautiful delicate rose; the soft ringlets of bright golden hair fell around her shoulders like a dash of sunshine; she had a perfect mouth with rosebud lips, but one of her greatest charms lay in her smile, disclosing a double row of pearly teeth. She was graceful and airy as a sylph.

At the drawing-room door she stepped aside and made them a graceful curtsy. They entered, and found already gathered Mrs. Edmonds and Annie, Mr. Crowningshield, Lord Graeme and Julien.

The gentlemen rose, and Lord Graeme, offering his arm to Lady Hawren, led the way to the dining room on the opposite side of the great hall. The room was magnificent, the service elegant. The table was laid for eight, Lady Hawren's party, Lord Graeme, and Flora, who was in every way shown as much courtesy as though she were mistress of the mansion. Lord Graeme led Lady Hawren to a seat at the farther end of the table; Julien, following close, placed her chair and seated her comfortably. Lord Graeme returned to the upper end of the table, where his own page stood ready to seat him. He motioned Mr. Crowningshield and Mrs. Edmonds to his left, while the butler seated Miss Annie next below Mrs. Edmonds, on Lady Hawren's right. First on his right was Kathryn; then Flora, then Julien. The butler attended in full costume. Lady Hawren did the honors of the table with graceful ease. The dinner was excellent. Mrs. Macleod, with great consideration, had dinner served in the private dining-room, on account of their long journey, supposing them to be fatigued; and had invited no guests, thinking it best to wait until they should have some repose before introducing any of the neighbors. Lady Hawren thanked her warmly for her consideration, feeling that under the circumstances

they would greatly prefer to have no company. After repairing to the drawing-room, a few hours were spent most pleasantly with music and conversation. Some instruments of music were scattered here and there. Lord Graeme rose presently, saying to Annie:

"Perhaps Miss Hamilton will favor us with a song."

"I?" said Annie. "Do you think, my Lord, that I sing?"

"I heard of your fine voice, Miss Hamilton, before I ever met you, and am truly desirous to listen to you."

"My Lord, you heard of my voice! Aha, Mr. Crowningshield, have you happened to mention my poor ability in writing to your friend?" she asked, turning to Mr. Crowningshield, who was near Mrs. Edmonds, as usual.

"Truly, Miss Hamilton, I did, not wishing to have the family taken my surprise and completely overwhelmed."

Offering his arm, Lord Graeme led her across the large room to the richly carved clavichord, the best keyed instrument of music in use in those days. She sang; her well-trained voice, rising and swelling, filled the room with melody.

She then asked Mrs. Edmonds to play, while she and Kathryn would sing a duet. The young ladies sang well together; Kathryn had a mellow contralto voice, which chorded well with Annie's rich soprano.

Now, the ladies being quite exhausted from the effects of their journey, Mrs. Macleod and Flora conducted them to their apartments, where their maids were awaiting them.

"What has become of *Madame, Marie*?" asked Lady Hawren.

"Ah, *Madame*, she ees fatigue; she haf retire, *Miladi*!" returned Marie.

"And Phyllis, Marie?" asked Kathryn. "Where is poor old Phyllis?"

"Ah, le noir! She haf retire aussi. She haf rheumatees, she call him."

Kathryn had never slept away from her mother; and as their suites joined and their dressing-rooms were separated by a portière only, she remained with her mother, while Hortense and Marie assisted them in disrobing.

"Oh, mother," cried Kathryn, "I do love Flora; she is the sweetest creature! Who is she, anyway, mother? She appears to be mistress of ceremonies, and is so different from her mother. Indeed, it does not seem possible that Mrs. Macleod can be her mother. Oh, she's the dearest, sweetest—— Mother, do you not think she is just a fairy?"

"She is a sweet, pretty girl, Kathryn; we will find out more about her perhaps," replied Lady Hawren, as Hortense drew off her rich black pelisse.

"Oh, she just cannot be a servant!" cried Kathryn, while Marie drew on her soft nightrobe.

"Her mother is housekeeper in grandfather's establishment. I suppose there has been no lady of the house since the death of my grandmother, so they have managed everything, dear."

"But, mother, Flora is so unlike her mother," persisted Kathryn.

"True; she no more resembles her mother than you resemble me."

"Ah, mother! Why am I not just like you? Then I should be so charmingly pretty, *ma mère!*"

"Darling, you are like your father; that, I think, is much better, for I think of him whenever I look into your eyes and stroke your gold-brown hair," returned she, caressing her lovely daughter.

"I am glad, then, that I am like my father.—Marie, now arrange my hair for bed.—I am Scotch, then, mother, while you are French; is it not so?"

"True, to some extent; your father was pure Scotch, while I am French-English."

"Oh, Hortense, would not you like to be a bonnie Scotch lassie, like me?" exclaimed Kathryn playfully.

"Me, Scoottch lazzie? Nevaire! I zould be Française, I, meme. Mais, I lige to be Englaise Ladie, lige your mudder, Miladi. Zat vould nod be so bad. Zen I lige ze English shentlehomme, vair mudge; he ess nice!"

"Ah, Hortense, you should not look too high! A Scotch yeoman should do you," said Kathryn.

"How is *Madame* pleased, Marie, since her arrival?" asked Lady Hawren.

"Eh, Madame ees vair much delight!"

"Mother, is not grandfather so nice! And may I not go with you to see him in the morning again?" asked Kathryn anxiously.

"Oh, certainly, if you wish it!"

"And, mother, did you notice Lord Graeme is so nice to Flora, and treats her just as a sister?"

"Yes; it is nice in him to show her so much courtesy. I suppose they have been brought up together, maybe from infancy, and he feels as a brother would toward a sister; something as it is with yourself and your Cousin Edwin."

"Oh, yes; dear Ned! How long it is since I saw him! Oh, mother, must I go sleep away from you?"

"Yes, darling; you have delightful apartments of your own; now take charge of them. Take her in, Marie."

"Then, mother, go with me and see my apartments; they are exquisite."

Lady Hawren, although robed for bed, went with her. Marie drew back the heavy wine-colored drapery, disclosing Kathryn's bedroom with hangings of rich

wine-colored velvet, heavily fringed with gold-colored silk.

"Let us go into your dressing-room, darling; I will see your boudoir to-morrow." A little fire was sparkling in the grate.

"How lovely it all is, mother; almost if not quite equal to the lovely rooms in your uncle's grand Hôtel in Paris."

"It is altogether lovely, darling; I trust you may be happy here, with such pleasant surroundings," said Lady Hawren.

"Oh, I am happy, mother! And what do you think of Lord Graeme? He is your cousin, also. How do you like your cousin, mother?"

"Do not ask me, dear; I do not know yet what I think of him. Now, my dear, you must go to sleep. Your rooms are very elegant. I will look into your boudoir in the morning. I suspect it is a counterpart of my own."

"Mother, I believe there is just a portière between them; if so, we can draw it back and throw the rooms into one—they must have been made for just us. Good-night, mother!" she said, kissing her, then ran into her bedroom and clambered up on the high bed. "Now, mother, will you let Marie loop back the hangings between us? Then we will not seem to be so far apart."

"Yes, darling. Good-night!"

"Thank you, mother. Good-night!"



CHAPTER VII.

A TALK WITH GRANDFATHER.

"Even now," thought Bertram, passion stirred,
"I called on hell, and hell has heard!
What lack I vengeance to command,
But of comrades, such a band?"

This Denzil, vow'd to every evil,
Might read a lesson to the devil.
Well, be it so! Each knave and fool
Shall serve as my revenge's tool!"

NEXT morning Kathryn was up early. Throwing on a heavy stuff robe of soft wool lined with cardinal silk, she sat by the fire while Marie drew on her hose and shoes; then fled into her mother's sleeping apartment and aroused her with a kiss, saying:

"Mother, mother, get up, so that we may go out and look all over this lovely old place! And we are to see dear grandfather again this morning." Then, dashing through her mother's boudoir, stopping there long enough to ascertain that this was separated from her own only by a heavy wall of drapery, she flew across a long corridor and tapped gently at Annie's door. Annie, who was still in bed, thinking it was Elsie coming to build her fire, called out:

"Come in! Here I have awaited you for an hour!"

Kathryn ran in through the sitting room, saying: "Oh, are you still in bed? You must get up now; I want you to rove all over this old place with me to-day and see what we can find."

"You'll be sure to find many things such as you have never before seen, Kathryn," said Annie, yawning. "I thought you were Elsie come to make me a fire. Where can the girl be?"

"Be up, Annie; be getting up! How splendid it all is! Here is Elsie now; she will have you a blazing fire in no time."

"Why are you so tardy, Elsie?" scolded Annie. "Where have you been?"

"I's been in bed, Mis' Annie; 'deed I des now woked up. I was dat sleepy las' nite I drap off to sleep, an' des now woke," said Elsie, a stubby, black negro girl.

"I shall have you sleep near me, Elsie, where I can wake you of mornings."

"Oh, Annie, get ready and go with me! What a fine time—what fun we will have! I will run now and dress for breakfast. You must look your prettiest, for my new cousin is very nice; do you not think so?"

"Indeed, he is!" Annie replied, with a smile. "But I am not going to rise till I have a fire, if I lose my breakfast."

The heavy hangings, dividing the drawing-room from the beautiful breakfast parlor, were drawn aside, disclosing a charming and inviting table, just as Lady Hawren and Kathryn entered. They found Mr. Crowningshield and Mrs. Edmonds already in the drawing-room, standing in an alcove looking from a window out on the garden; that is, she was looking out; but his eyes rested on her face.

"I suppose we shall have a lovely view here, Mr. Crowningshield, a little later, when the cold frosts of winter have been driven away by the genial warmth of spring."

"Superb, madame! This is the finest garden in the country. We have a Frenchman who is a most excellent gardener, and who devotes his whole time to floriculture."

Now Flora entered, lovely as a poet's dream. Kathryn embraced her, saying:

"You sweet creature; how I love you already!"

"I am sure our love is mutual, Lady Kathryn," replied Flora, returning the caress.

"Oh, that I might express my love in so brave a manner!" said Mr. Crowningshield, moving toward the happy young girls, "and receive such an assurance."

"You might at least attempt it, Mr. Crowningshield," returned Kathryn, laughing. Mrs. Edmonds' face, usually so white, assumed a roseate hue.

Annie, descending the stairway, met Lord Graeme,

who was coming from the library. She curtsied low, and he offered her his arm, saying:

"Miss Hamilton, allow me to escort you to the breakfast parlor."

"With pleasure, my Lord. I perceive all are in advance of me this morning; surely, I have not kept breakfast waiting."

"No, no, Miss Hamilton! I trust your night's rest has been refreshing to you, and that you are restored from the fatigues of your long journey."

"I beg to assure you, my Lord, that I find myself quite refreshed and feel that I am perfectly restored to my former self, and am now ready for any adventure that may present itself," she replied, as they entered the drawing-room and were greeted by the assembled party.

Griffith, the butler, now inviting them to breakfast, he led her on to her place at Lady Hawren's right. Lady Hawren approached the end of the table, where she was to preside over the tea and coffee; her page stood ready to attend her. As he drew back her chair and placed a cushion for her feet he felt his arm grasped in no gentle manner.

"Bress de Lawd, I's dun find my li'le missy once more! Get out de way, heah, honey! I kin tak keer of her now, myself; we's done got home an' I's dun got ober the rummytiz. You's been gallantin' 'round longer nuff. Jes' git out de way now!" and old Phyllis shoved Julien rather roughly to one side.

"Why, Phyllis!" said Lady Hawren. "Are you going to claim your old place? Well, Julien, you can go and attend Kathryn and Flora, who are just entering."

Petroneus, who was placing the chair for Lord Graeme, smiling in his sleeve, gave Julien a sly wink and said to him in an undertone:

"Aha, my young sprig, you are browbeaten by

Le Noir, as you call her." Julien, with a rueful face and a sidelong glance at Phyllis, met the young girls and placed them at Gaston's right hand. Petroneus was a well-built lad, his brown visage and sparkling black eyes showing him to be of gypsy blood. He was a remnant of a dismembered band, of which his father had been king, and had in some way fallen into the hands of Gaston, Lord Graeme, whose page he now was.

The table was loaded with delicious food. The silver service was magnificent, the glass bright and sparkling, the napery superb; all showing Mrs. Macleod's ability as housekeeper.

Immediately after breakfast Lady Hawren and Kathryn were conducted to the Earl's sitting room. There they found the Earl surrounded with every comfort. He had just enjoyed a good breakfast, and the room had been arranged in anticipation of their visit. Lady Hawren advanced, and greeting him, said:

"We have come to sit awhile with you, dear grandfather. Have you enjoyed your breakfast?"

"Oh, yes; very much, thank you, Lady Hawren, and am glad you have come thus early, for I was growing impatient to see you again. How have you rested?"

"Quite well, I thank you, my Lord; I feel much refreshed, and was most anxious to see and converse with you again."

"Have this chair on my right, Louise. And how is Lady Kathryn?" he asked, looking up into her bright, rosy face.

"Dear grandfather, I feel quite well, thank you; and I assure you I am glad to see your Lordship looking so well this morning," she replied, kissing his brow. He had them placed near him, so that he could look upon their faces. Kathryn was seated at his left. He

stroked her lovely brown hair, and looked admiringly from one to the other.

"I am glad to have you sit with me, as I have much to say to you both."

"I understand that my grandmother died at this place about four years ago," observed Lady Hawren.

"Yes, Louise; four years ago. While her two brave sons lived I felt that I had an heir in either, if other should die, worthy of the title and estates of our ancestors. But the Lord saw fit to take them both in one day, in one battle." The old Earl paused, and appeared to be looking into the past. Then went on: "You wish to know something of your grandmother, Mary. Well, when Louis Hawren married my daughter, Lady Margaret, her dowry consisted of some fine lands lying along the Firth of Clyde, to which he added many more acres of fine lands and built up an excellent estate. The manor-house was a fine old building, but he built on, and added more to it, making it more into the style of a castle, with turrets, towers, and battlements; for they long lived in the midst of ferocious foes. These lands now constitute one of the finest estates in western Scotland. Sir Louis did not live long after he had finished his building and improving; and Lady Margaret, on the death of her two sons, which was about fifteen years ago, came with her retinue and took up her abode here, in order to be with me in my last days. But ah, the will of the Lord be done! She was taken away, and I am left here bereft of all my children!" The old man groaned.

"Dear grandfather," said Lady Hawren, "let me be as a daughter to you; just as long as you live, it will be my delight to comfort and make you happy."

"And I, too, dear grandfather," said Kathryn, gently stroking his long, silvery hair.

"But your noble son, grandfather; my mother told

me of him, and I supposed he still lived until Mr. Crowningshield told me of his death."

"Aye, Mary. He was my idol. Clifton has been dead nineteen years; his wife survived him only three years, leaving their only son, Robert Lord Clifton, heir to Fleetwood. And when Marian died leaving a son I had the two brought up here together. I always loved Clifton most. Gaston was notoriously bad, troublesome to the housekeeper and to his tutor. On the other hand, Robert was one of the very best of boys, never giving any trouble; but after they grew up they fought and quarreled incessantly; and as it turned out Clifton was the bad one, for he has proven to be enormously wicked. Ah me, who would have thought it?"

"My dear grandfather, where is Lord Clifton now?" asked Lady Hawren.

"At the age of twenty he succeeded to a barony in Scotland, and must go to take charge of it. But before leaving, in his haste to become Earl of Fleetwood, he undertook to assassinate his old grandfather."

"You, my Lord? Oh, how could he be so cruel!" cried Kathryn, in dismay.

"Oh, mercy, my Lord; surely you are mistaken!" exclaimed Lady Hawren.

"No, Mary. I have every proof against him; but the villain left immediately, and I have never seen him since, and hope I shall never see him again, as much as I have loved him. I sent him word never again to darken the doors of Fleetwood as long as I live. But he has had the audacity to attempt repeatedly to force himself into my presence. But I have never seen him, nor shall I ever see him again. When I am gone he will be master here. If it were not that the estates are fettered by entail, he would get nothing but an empty title; I should leave all to Gaston, Lord Graeme, and to Lady Kathryn, who will doubtless be your heiress, Louise. But Lord Clifton's prerogative will extend

over the entire district, the vast domains of Fleetwood. And now," he said to Kathryn, placing his trembling hand on her head, "my fine girl, you will inherit a noble estate from your mother; you will be a great heiress. Darling, should you ever see Lord Clifton, the villain who attempted to take my life, who will be Earl of Fleetwood—and you doubtless will see him soon, for I am not long for this world now—with your beauty and prospective fortune he may wish to offer you marriage and thus unite the two estates of Hawren and Fleetwood. Promise me, dear, that you will never marry the base villain who has attempted to assassinate your old grandfather."

"Oh, my dear grandfather, indeed, indeed, I *do* promise! I could never think of marrying *him*; no, no, never. I will *never* marry a man who would assassinate you, my grandfather—a man who would attempt such villainy!" Kathryn was excited; her eyes blazed with indignation.

"Thank you, Lady Kathryn," he said, gently stroking her soft hand.

"Now, dear, if you will just as willingly promise me that you will marry Gaston Lord Graeme, if he should ever ask you, I will take that promise, also; for it would please me much."

"No, no, darling; you cannot promise this—do not make too many promises! There may be some mistake," cried Lady Hawren distressedly.

"Well, well, then; I am not so set on this as the other promise; but remember, child, it would please me much. For in case of Clifton's death Gaston, who is next in the male line, would become Earl of Fleetwood. And it would please me to know that you would some day become Countess of Fleetwood." Kathryn blushed, and Lady Hawren said:

"My dear grandfather, may it not be possible there

is some mistake? May not Lord Clifton have some enemy——”

“No, Louise; no! I have proof, positive proof. It was on the eve of his starting for Scotland; he lingered around, as if dreading to go, and said he hated so to leave me; and sent his men on some hours ahead, intending to camp about ten miles off on the river, in order to have a great hunt next day; and the attempted assassination was after all thought he had departed. He had bidden me an affectionate farewell—the hypocrite!—and pretended to have started away. I was strolling, as was my habit in the evening twilight, along the pleasant walk that leads from my door down among the trees and shrubs toward the postern gate when someone rushed upon me in the dusk of the evening. I could not see clearly, but heard the clang of his spurs, when Gaston fortunately happened to be coming in and rushed upon him. The villain turned and fled, no doubt thinking that he had finished me, for the coat I had on was cut into shreds almost. I recognized the coat and hat he wore as belonging to Clifton; but his face was concealed. We heard him ride rapidly away, and listened until the footsteps died in the distance. Next morning a dagger belonging to Clifton, which he highly prized as having belonged to his father, was found on the spot in the tall grass—there you will see it, dears, suspended over the chimney-piece. Indeed, that is proof enough, for he never allowed any one else to handle it. Gaston had gone out a little while before bird hunting, accompanied by one of his attendants, and had returned just in time to save my life, and was much astounded at what had taken place. Then after an hour a strange man stopped in, who said he was well acquainted with Lord Clifton and swore that he had met him about five miles away, riding furiously, with hat slouched over his face. And he was surprised that he neither looked at

nor spoke to him, but dashed on his way. Lady Hawren, the proof was clear; but he had gone on his way to his home in Scotland, and I never allowed anything to be said or done in regard to the matter. It was such a blow to me! I had always loved the boy more than any one else. I made Gaston and his man Donald promise never to mention it to any one, upon their lives. The boys never liked each other, and were always in trouble whenever Gaston was at home; for he was often away, as he now is, for months at a time and no one knew where, and he would be at home scarcely a day before they were at daggers' points. I kept Lord Clifton in school most of his time, in order to keep them apart. Ah me, the misery of it, to think that so fine a lad should come to be so great a villain! The longer I live the more determined am I that he shall never again come into my presence."

"Oh, dear grandfather, may there not be some extenuating circumstance?" cried Lady Hawren, in great anxiety.

"Do not try to exonerate him, Louise. There is no forgiveness in my heart; no, no! I shall never forgive him. I sent him to travel on the Continent with a tutor of my own choice, and it was shortly after his return that he was notified of the death of his uncle. Then he and Gaston had a quarrel, and he was leaving next evening when he must make an attack on my life. I mean to have a new will written out, and everything on this place which is not included in the entail shall be left to Lady Kathryn, here—all my personal property, chattels—all! But the massive plate, wrought with armorial bearings, with the old mahogany furniture and all the heirlooms, are entailed, and go to him. The splendid old French furniture, Louise, which you will find in the suite of rooms on the southeast side, is yours, having belonged to your grandmother, Lady Margaret, Baroness of Hawren.

Those apartments are now yours, with all they contain ; you may take charge of them and use them as you wish. Lady Margaret at one time thought of making Flora her heiress, so much attached was she to the child ; but she died, still hoping to hear of you. Have you seen our little Flora ?” he asked, turning to Kathryn.

“Oh, yes, my Lord ; and she is the dearest creature I ever saw ! Will you please tell us of her, dear grandfather ?”

“Oh, yes ; her mother came here with Lady Margaret fifteen years ago. Clifton and Gaston both being left orphans about that time, Lady Margaret and Mrs. Macleod, who was Lady Margaret’s companion or attendant, took charge of the little orphans and brought them up for me, and Mrs. Macleod has been a mother to them. After Margaret’s death Mrs. Macleod requested to be permitted to remain as housekeeper ; and, as the old housekeeper was quite old and feeble, she was permitted to retire, to live in quietude the remainder of her days, and we were glad to retain Mrs. Macleod in that position. She has proven to be one of the finest managers I have ever seen. The poor woman has had some great trouble ; Lady Margaret never told me the particulars, but it was with her husband, who was a sea captain, and who died while the child was an infant. Mrs. Macleod has been as a mother to the boys, and felt she could not leave them. Flora has been brought up as a sister to them, and we love her very much. Lady Margaret, while she lived, saw personally to her education and kept her in the convent school near by or kept a teacher in the house for her. She often spoke of adopting her and making her an heiress, and would have done so but for the hope of sometime finding her daughter or some of her posterity ; she did leave her a good dowry. Flora has become very dear to us all, and has ever been kept above

her station as the daughter of an upper servant. She is the light of the home, Lady Kathryn, and I request of you and your friends, never allow her to feel the least humiliation on account of her mother's position. She has been well brought up, and she and her mother have been at the head of the household for a number of years, no other woman on the place above them. The boys look on her as a sister, having been brought up by the same mother. Now, Louise, as the Hawren estate is in lease for some years yet and the lease is promptly paid up, making a splendid income, it is my wish that you and your daughter remain here with your old grandfather as long as he shall live."

"Oh, yes, grandfather; we will gladly do that!" replied Lady Hawren.

"It is my wish that you take charge now as mistress of Fleetwood Castle. Mrs. Macleod has a fine corps of servants at her command. And, darling"—to Kathryn—"you may take Flora as a companion; she will love you, no doubt. She has long been the pet of the household, and her pet name is Dearest, by which she has been known in this home from her infancy by every member of the family, every servant on the place. She scarcely knew any other name until since the boys returned from abroad and found her such a grown-up young lady; they are trying to break themselves of using such an endearing term, and to call her Flora."

"Oh, thank you, my Lord; thank you! She is the dearest one, and I shall be delighted to have her companionship."

"Now, your Lordship must be quite tired out. Will you not lie down a little and rest?" said Lady Hawren.

"Yes, Mary. Will you ring for my attendant, darling?"

Kathryn touched a silver call bell, and the old valet soon appeared. The ladies withdrew, saying:

"Dear grandfather, whenever you feel like conversing we will come again and sit with you."

"Thank you, my darlings; I shall be pleased to have your company at any time."

The afternoon was fine, and the ladies decided to spend it in rambling over the old building, as it was rather cold for outdoor exercise. Led by Lord Graeme, they went up to the armory, to examine the old pieces in the museum of curiosities. This was a large, long hall, hung with gilded arms, trophies, tapestries, and conquered banners. A great window looked out over a magnificent forest. A seat was here, constructed in the embrasure, covered with a great, fleecy robe. On one side of the casement was a figure in plated armor, cap-a-pie, helmet closed; against the breast, held by the right arm, was a long sword, the point resting on the console, on which the ironclad feet rested, the crossed hilt coming up even with the head-piece. On the opposite side hung a figure in chain armor of more ancient date, a network of steel rings interlaced, of Oriental origin. Above this was a cuirass, and next a target, in which rested four bask-hilted swords.

"And here," said Lord Graeme, "is a dirk in scabbard and with ribbon, worn by my uncle, Sir John Graeme. And this, a breastplate and shield of one of our ancestors, Lady Kathryn."

"Here, my Lord, is a crossbow with arrows; and I perceive you have here musical instruments also. Is not this an old harp?" asked Annie.

"Yes, ma'am; and this is a bagpipe with Scotch plaid."

"And what, my Lord, is this, so tall; is it not a spear?"

"Yes, Lady Kathryn; a missile to be hurled at an enemy in the distance; and this is a ponderous lance

of the Middle Ages, and is nearly eighteen feet long," replied Lord Graeme, handling a long lance.

"Oh," said Annie, "here are some old drinking cups, and a beautiful hunting horn!"

"Yes," he said, selecting a splendid drinking cup, "this cup belonged once to Charles II., and this fine hunting horn, carved with many names, is from the Old Hermitage Castle, and was a gift to me from my Grandfather Graeme. Here are cut-and-thrust Toledo swords."

"My Lord," asked Lady Kathryn, "what is this short-looking knife?"

"That is a *couteau-de-chasse*. And here, my Lady, is a mixture of fine arms and other articles—scimetars, cutlass, battle-axes, hawberks, escutcheons, breastplates and shields. Here are Roman lamps, busts and bronze figures, antique spurs and buckles; and a great club, or bludgeon, with iron spikes," Lord Graeme went on explaining.

"My Lord, this seems to be a hatchet at the end of a long pole, with a hook at the back," said Lady Kathryn.

"Oh, yes, my Lady; this is a Lochaber axe. They were formerly very much used in Scotland; the hook was found convenient in scaling walls and other high places; by fixing it to the wall, they would pull themselves up by the long handle. They were also much used by the natives of Ireland, and are supposed to have been introduced from Scandinavia. Here are a broad-sword and battle-axe that were taken by my grandfather on the battlefield. And here, ladies, are fine antlers from the denizens of the forest; you here see antlered skulls, trophies of the desperate chase, of which old vassals have told many tales; and here are helmets and shields and axes of many different kinds, which hardy yeomen have handled to good purpose; breastplates and other implements of war, with many

banners of the vanquished foe. These are antlers of the red deer; and here are stag horns, jack-boots, pistols, Highland dirks, another target with swords, a black watch pistol, a genuine Andrea Ferara, a basket-hilt broadsword of fine steel, richly inlaid, an heirloom in the family, the belt plated with silver, and belonged to my uncle, Lord Clifton; it is like the great sword of Wallace that hangs in the tower of Dumbarton."

"Oh, this is a beauty!" cried Kathryn, handling and examining a beautiful court sword and greatly admiring its symmetry and high polish, the richly jeweled hilt and finely wrought scabbard. "Oh, what a beauty! And all I see here in this space have the same crest. Were these your ancestors'? This is by far the finest collection we have seen, and more modern."

"All in this collection, from that window on, belong to Clifton, the outlaw, Lady; let us pass on."

"No, my Lord; I must look at these! This is decidedly the finest collection yet," said Kathryn. "I must examine these; and you, my Lord, will kindly tell me about this outlaw, while I scrutinize more closely these splendid arms." She was now examining a fine Damascus sword, on the blade of which were figures wrought in marquetry with small gems. And here is a lovely bugle, ornamented with the same crest, wrought in gold, ivory mouth, gold tipped. Oh, here are some curiosities in the way of drinking cups; and some seem to be of most ancient pattern and workmanship. Now, my Lord Graeme, I must hear the story of this outlaw of whom you spoke."

"Then, my cousin, if you will come with me back to the window-seat we will sit on the robe, and I shall tell you of this desperate character, who is a member of this family."

Leaving the rest of the party deeply interested in

the fine collections, he led her to the casement, and on their way she said:

"Oh, you surprise me, my Lord! A member of this family *now*, and an *outlaw*? I supposed he must have lived some centuries ago. He is not a proscribed outlaw?"

"No, my Lady; but should be, by all the laws of the country," he returned, with a downcast look, as he placed her on the seat and sat down beside her. He then continued:

"This Clifton, the outlaw, is my cousin—prospective heir to the Earldom of Fleetwood. He is not living here now, for he has inherited a barony in Scotland, and has gone to that country."

"Oh!" cried Kathryn, and a deep blush overspread her face, as she remembered the request her grandfather had made of her.

"He is very proud; a most impatient and arrogant fool—a thousand pardons, my Lady—and, wishing to become Earl of Fleetwood, thinking perhaps that our grandfather's longevity was holding too long in check his lordly aspirations, on the eve of his departure manifested his desire to be rid of him by making an attempt on his life." Gaston was looking on the floor all this time, and did not now raise his eyes. "I will take you in grandfather's sitting room to-morrow and show you the very dagger he used," he continued, looking off at the ladies and Mr. Crowningshield in the other end of the room.

"Grandfather told us of this, my Lord; and I saw the dagger, hanging over the mantle, the hilt all jeweled and enameled with the armlets of Clifton," said Lady Kathryn, gazing on his face and wondering why he should not look at her.

"I was gone on a hunting party," he continued, "and returned just in time to save my grandfather's life, which cannot now last very long; and when he is gone

this place, and all here, will be ruled by this bigoted villain, and doubtless he will be wishing to marry you, my pretty cousin." He now raised his eyes to her face for a moment.

"He need not. I will marry no such man; never!" Kathryn declared, with face suffused. "My Lord, you and grandfather seem to be troubled with the same fear; but you need not, for I will never marry a man who has it in his heart to commit murder, if I know it; especially one who would assassinate his own grandfather."

And now, as the others were leaving, they rose and followed.



CHAPTER VIII.

MEETING OF ANNIE AND GUY.

"She was a phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;
 A lovely apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes are stars of twilight fair—
 Like twilight, too, her dusky hair."

* * * * *

"A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, and promises as sweet!"

IN the great hall of Weirwolf Castle Lord Clifton sat, when his friend, Guy Brignol, returning from a mission on which he had been sent by the young baron, entered.

"Welcome back, Guy, my friend!" said the baron, as he rose and shook warmly the hand of his messenger. "What news? How is the health of my dear old grandfather?" he continued, as he led Mr. Brignol into his own private room and closed the door.

"Be seated, Guy, and tell me all about your recep-

tion at Fleetwood, for I could scarcely await your return to hear from my grandfather. This indignity is more than I can bear."

"They say that he is hale and hearty, my Lord," said Guy, taking a seat. "I very much regret that I must say I have not seen the Earl of Fleetwood. I did not succeed in making my way into his presence."

"Oh, Guy! And you have not seen him?"

"No, my Lord; and, besides, I received insults and very bad treatment. And they are all greatly rejoiced by the arrival of his Lordship's great-granddaughter, the Baroness of Hawren, with her daughter, Lady Kathryn Arranton; and I do not know how many others, my Lord. There seemed to be a great number of attendants; the old place was running over with ladies, pages, French maids, and others."

"But, Guy, could you not see his Lordship himself, and ascertain the cause of this change, his sudden dislike for me? And did he not grant me permission to come to visit him?" asked Lord Clifton, bowing his head in his hands upon the table.

"Indeed, my Lord, I saw him not. It was impossible. He was closeted with his barrister, his agent, and his secretary, so they said; making over his will, my Lord Graeme informed me, and could not be interrupted."

"And could you get no word to him, Guy?"

"No, my Lord; impossible! Gaston had left strict orders for no one from Weirwolf to be admitted; just as it was with your Lordship, when you were several times refused admission. And I think that even the ladies, sir, have been posted on the subject and are set against you."

The young Baron sat a while as if in deep sorrow; then, raising his head, he asked:

"Did you meet the Lady—my cousin, Lady Hawren?"

"No, my Lord; I tell you, I was not permitted to put my foot inside the door, except in the housekeeper's room," returned he, with indignation.

"Guy, this is the greatest outrage I have ever known, and is all undoubtedly Gaston's work."

"I had the pleasure, though—or misfortune, I know not which—to see her daughter—I'm sure it was she, Lady Kathryn Arranton; Mrs. Macleod told me her name—the prospective heiress of Hawren."

"Did you, indeed, see the young lady?"

"Aye, indeed, I did; and was so unfortunate as to raise within her a perfect storm of indignation."

"How, now, Guy? I trust you have not been ungallant or imprudent, though I know you too well to even question you, Guy, as to that."

"Not so, my Lord—at least, nothing of the kind was ever intended on my part. However, she must have mistaken me for someone else, some way. I was wishing to speak first to Mrs. Macleod, and came up in the small court. You know, Lady Margaret's apartments are situated at the east end of a long colonnade, opposite those occupied by Mrs. Macleod. I had started to see Mrs. Macleod, and when quite near the long steps leading to the colonnade I heard the tinkling of a lute and ladies' voices in jesting conversation. A lady stepped out at the doorway of what we call your Aunt Margaret's boudoir, just in front of me, stroking her nose and saying, 'I inherited my nose, I suppose, from my Roman ancestors, ladies, and am not at all ashamed of it.' My Lord, she has an immense nose; but a perfect charm lay in her voice. After walking a little way, she faced around, seeing me standing beside the great rose-bush near the steps. She must have thought I had been listening to their talk, else I cannot see why she should have become so indignant. I was all travel-stained, or dusty, and she may have taken me for a highway thief, or a smuggler, or some

such outlandish person. She flushed indignantly. At any rate, she knew that I heard what she said about her nose. My Lord, oh, she is queenly!"

"What, Guy; an American queenly?"

"Aye, my Lord; oh, if you could have seen her rare dignity and the flash of her dark eyes, her pearly, peach-bloom cheeks! And she has a dainty, slender foot——"

"How, now, Guy; how saw you her foot?"

"Why, my Lord, I was standing on the ground, and she being just above me, as it were, walking along near the edge of the floor——"

"But, Guy, you should not have taken advantage of the opportunity thus offered to look at the lady's feet!"

"Hout, my Lord! You are o'er nice—not take the opportunity! I can assure your Lordship I should have seen more of her pretty little feet if I had not found it impossible to keep my eyes from her face—her heavenly face!"

"Heavenly face, Guy; and such a large nose?"

"Oh, my Lord, her face was of such rare beauty that I noticed not her nose, and should not have been aware of its greatness had not she herself spoken of its size."

"Well, Guy, what had she to say after she saw you?"

"When she turned and saw me standing so near she flushed hotly. With as much politeness as I could command at the moment, my Lord, I raised my hat. Then she cried out indignantly, stamping her pretty little foot: 'What are you here for?' Oh, her hair is of midnight hue—'an ever fresh and sweet surprise'—and her ruby lips and dreamy eyes——"

"Oh, you are crazy already about her! What return did you then make, Guy; how apologize for your conduct?"

"I stammered: 'Your pardon, Lady; I wish to—I

have come to—I have a message for his Lordship, the noble Earl of Fleetwood.’

“‘Indeed! *You* have a message for him? No doubt you would like to deliver your message! You would like to assassinate him! No, you cannot see him! We have positive orders that he is not to be disturbed. Leave this instant, sir, or you will be arrested!’

“‘Dear Lady,’ I said, ‘perhaps you do not know to whom you thus address yourself. I am——’

“‘I have no desire, sir, to know you. It is certain your presence is not required here.’

“‘Your pardon! You mistake, Lady; I am not—I am——’

“‘I am not interested, sir, in who you are or who you are not,’ and, turning, she swept me a grand curtsey and returned into Lady Margaret’s boudoir, carrying herself haughtily; she moved with stately step. What majesty was revealed in her carriage! True, her nose is prominent; but she has a small and firm mouth.”

“I think, Guy, that you are enraptured with her beauty. Cupid is represented as a small wight, but he works the mightiest of men.”

“Oh, my Lord, I beg to assure you ‘this superficial tale is but a preface to her worthy praise.’”

“And, Guy, you were not allowed to enter—not permitted to speak to my grandfather?”

“No, indeed, my Lord; and poor old Sandy, the footman, wept when he assured me I could not be admitted, in your behalf, to have speech of your grandfather. So also did Mrs. Macleod. All the servants are your friends, and very much regret the condition of affairs. But my Lord Graeme has all in his hands, and rules the place; his own men are stationed everywhere.”

“This is an unheard-of indignity. I well know it is all Gaston’s work; but how he could ever so impose

upon my grandfather and so set him against me I cannot comprehend."

"Aye, believe me, my Lord, it is all Gaston's maliciousness."

"Gaston, Gaston! Why should you wish to work me such harm as to rob me of my dear grandfather's love and confidence?"

"Mark me, my Lord, it is by robbing you of his Lordship's love and confidence he robs you of much else; and therein lies the cause. You know, my Lord, that his Lordship, the Earl of Fleetwood, can will away everything, save the title and the Fleetwood estates."

Leaning on the table, the Baron of Weirwolf buried his face in his folded arms. For some minutes he remained thus; then, raising his head, he shook back his sunny locks, rose, and walked the floor with many a groan and sigh; then, stopping in front of Guy, who had also risen, he said tenderly:

"Oh, Guy, to what lengths will a man be led for the sake of filthy lucre! Gaston is welcome to the hoarded wealth of Fleetwood; but to be robbed of my grandfather's love is more than I can endure. To do this he must have resorted to calumniations of the vilest sort. The Earl has been grossly deceived, and they will allow me no means of exonerating myself." He walked the floor in deep thought, then said: "Guy, this is my last effort; and as we leave in a few days for London, where I shall be kept busy for a number of months, I shall in all probability never see him more. He will die without an explanation, without a reconciliation, and I shall never be permitted to see him again. Such an outrage is indeed hard for me to bear! Oh, if I might see him again, and learn what he has against me that has caused this sudden change, it would be some relief! But it is Gaston, as you say, who has wrought this change, and he knows

that for me to have an interview with my grandfather would upset his plans completely."

"Yes, my Lord, it is as you say. Mrs. Macleod told me with tears streaming from her eyes, poor woman, that his Lordship, your grandfather, never steps outside the door now. But, my Lord, there is the 'bell that calls to lighted hall and friendly feast.'"

"Yes, dear friend, and I suppose you are both hungry and tired, after your long journey." And arm in arm they left the pleasant sitting room to prepare for dinner.



CHAPTER IX.

THE BANSHEE'S VOICE.

"The Banshee's wild voice sings the death dirge before me;
The pall of the dead for a mantle hangs o'er me."

AT Fleetwood Castle how happily the days glided by! The Earl's health continued to be fine; and as the bright spring advanced how pleasant it was for him to walk up and down in the great hall, with Lady Hawren and the interested Kathryn beside him, conversing of days long gone by! For they never grew tired of hearing him tell of Lady Margaret and her daughter Mary, Lady Hawren's own mother, who died so young and left her in a foreign land. She knew so little of England and her relatives. Day after day Gaston Graeme appeared to be more and more in love with his new cousin; so much so that he could scarcely remain out of her presence, even during study hours, for now she spent several hours each day in study, Mrs. Edmonds giving her thorough training in instrumental music, Miss Hamilton superintending the train-

ing of her voice, and Madame drilling her in literature and languages.

Ere they had been in Fleetwood three weeks Gaston had sought an interview with Lady Hawren, asking her permission to pay his addresses to Lady Kathryn; which request Lady Hawren absolutely refused, saying:

"My Lord, I cannot permit it. Kathryn is far too young to listen to a proposition of marriage, and she must pursue her studies unmolested."

He insisted, but she was firm. The truth was she had not liked him from the first, but felt an aversion for him; she could not say why it was, for he seemed in every way a gentleman, was a most agreeable companion, and appeared most devoted to his grandfather.

He had shown them all much courtesy, and on this pleasant day in early spring he had been conducting them through the great gallery of fine old paintings. They walked out into the court on the terraces, down the pleasant walks leading to the parks, all representing much beauty and refined taste, and found the external beauties and magnificence equal to the internal loveliness of the suites of rooms decorated in the utmost elegance, the long corridors and grand staircases. Now they had returned to the sitting room. Lord Graeme, opening a large French window, invited Lady Kathryn out on a fine old classical portico, and said, as he led her to a rustic seat and placed himself beside her:

"Let us sit here, cousin, and watch the Count at his work. Is it pleasant enough for you; are you quite comfortable?" he asked solicitously.

"Oh, yes, thank you!" she said. He drew her Bengal, or India, shawl closer over her shoulders, for it was growing late and cool, then regarded her with a look of ineffable love. Kathryn felt flattered by the attentions paid to her by the young Lord Graeme.

She was gratified, and found it exceedingly pleasant to have a lover; she had never before received any marked attention from a young man, and Gaston was a most pleasant companion, a polished gentleman with most elegant manners, finely educated, sang well, having a rich sonorous voice; his dark hair and eyes were becoming to him. She looked away over the garden and said:

“My Lord, how is it my grandfather, being so old, has the garden kept in such good style, and has the beautiful ladies’ bower kept in such good condition, when he has for so long been deprived of feminine society?”

“My dear cousin, grandfather had in his employ an old French gardener, who had everything his own way for many years, a floriculturist by nature, who had an eye for the beautiful. He had this bower planned by an architect, after the ladies’ bower of the early days of Louis XIV. By the servants he was called ‘Old Monzie,’ meaning, I think, Monsieur. The old man died a few years ago, but now we have another equally good, to whom my grandfather has given the appellation of ‘The Count,’ because of his high pretensions; but he is a fine gardener, as you will soon be able to discern.” For a while she sat gazing out over the beautiful scene and he studying her beautiful face. For days he had made love to her on every occasion, although forbidden to speak to her on the subject.

“Dear cousin,” he said persistingly, “you know it is our grandfather’s wish—his most earnest desire—that we should wed. Only think how happy it would make him, should we gratify this, his dearest wish, while he still lives! His happiness would be complete, his last desire gratified. He would bestow upon us his blessings and all else he has in his power to give, and then lay down his life in perfect peace.”

“No, no, Gaston, I cannot; do not insist upon it!

My mother would never consent; besides, I cannot love you in that way. I love you as a cousin, as a friend; I enjoy your company, but do not ask me to marry you. I have my studies to pursue, and am too young to entertain the thought of matrimony, even for one moment, my Lord," she said, but did not look displeased, and he rather felt encouraged.

"Well, then, some time in the future; promise that you will be mine some day, sweetheart; only promise that some time, when it suits you, when you have learned to love me. Only say it, darling; promise; then I will be content, will go away and wait." He took her hand, but she withdrew it instantly. He looked pleadingly into her face.

"Why do you go away, my Lord? Why leave us?"

"My affairs of interest compel me. You will not care. I may be gone several months; may make a sea voyage and be gone even longer. I want your promise ere I leave you; surely you will give it, darling."

"No, no; wait until your return! I will think of it."

"Oh, cruel, sweet creature! Must I then wait so long for one encouraging——"

"Kathryn—my Lord—come in!" 'Twas Lady Hawren, who had approached the window. "Come," she continued, "we are soon going to dinner. Come in!"

She was never content to leave them together, even for a moment, and had instructed Marie to attend her mistress whenever in his company; but Marie had wandered off in the garden and was pleasantly chatting with the "Count." Lady Hawren was gifted beyond the ordinary with an intuitive cognition of man's inmost nature.

Now two months have elapsed. Lord Graeme had made the trip in the interests of his business affairs and returned about the middle of July. Next morning after his return the Earl of Fleetwood was found to

be quite ill. A servant was dispatched to the village for Doctor Godkins, the family physician, who soon arrived and went immediately to work to relieve his noble patient, and soon pronounced him resting easy. Lady Hawren took her seat by the side of her grandfather and gave him her undivided attention.

Doctor Godkins was a fine man, an eminent physician, amiable and gracious.

"Yes," he said, when in company of the ladies that night, "I was young when I left my home near Locherly, Scotland—about twenty-one—and had just begun the practice of medicine and surgery." A slight shade of sadness now passed over his face, usually so bright, but did not linger, for it was soon chased away with a smile. Next day the Earl appeared still feeble and not able to rise; yet with no apparent distress or suffering. And at his request a messenger was sent to Carlisle for his cousin, the Bishop of Ely, who was spending some time in the city and who had written that he would make the Earl a visit before returning to his Episcopate or Diocese in Cambridgeshire.

Toward evening the Bishop of Ely arrived, escorted by a splendid cavalcade. His reverence was received and greeted with great warmth by Lord Graeme and good Mr. Hayston, the chaplain, and the many noble friends who had gathered in, and was soon conducted to the presence of the noble old Earl, whose mind was still clear.

At the hour of early twilight Kathryn and Annie left the great hall where they had been walking up and down arm in arm.

"It is so sad," said Kathryn, as they proceeded up the stairway, "to see the noble Earl of Fleetwood brought to Death's door; it makes me nervous, and oh, so sad! Annie, let us continue our walk down this long, dark corridor which leads to the upper rooms of the west wing."

"Yes," said Annie; "since we cannot on account of the threatening storm go outside, we can promenade here and listen to the howling of the wind as it shrieks around the old gables and towers."

"Oh, yes, dear Annie; it is more appropriate than aught else we may do now!"

"And more consonant with our feelings," rejoined Annie.

"I am sad! Think, Annie, of the doubly died villain who will come into possession here as Earl, master of all, when my dear, gentle grandfather is no more."

At the end of the corridor they ascended a back stairway leading to the Mansard, then along another dark corridor until they reached a window in the farther end.

"Annie, let us open these old shutters and look out on the scene below." They worked at the fastenings and finally threw open the heavy shutters.

"There is nothing below but the servants' quarters," observed Annie, as the shutters flew back with a bang. Resting their arms on the window-ledge, they leaned forward to take in the scene.

"Yes, Annie, there is a beautiful scene—a lovely landscape—beyond the servants' quarters." After viewing the scene, they returned to the old Earl's room.

At ten o'clock supper was announced. The Earl appeared quite easy, and had fallen asleep. The Doctor, with the rest of the company, went out to enjoy the feast which had been prepared, leaving Mr. Crowningshield, Lady Hawren and Mrs. Macleod at the bedside of the Earl.

Kathryn and Flora stood behind Lady Hawren's chair, all watching over him with much solicitude. Doctor Godkins, on leaving the room, had said:

"His Lordship is doing well, and if not disturbed I trust will be much improved by morning. Exhaust-

tion appears to be the only trouble, but under no circumstances must he be excited, for fear of aneurismal dilatation of the heart."

Kathryn and Flora stood a while, then silently and quietly slipped out of the room and walked softly up and down the great hall. So quiet had been their movement that Lady Hawren had not missed them from the back of her chair. After making a few turns, and while at the farther end of the hall, they heard the Earl cry out as if in great excitement, and for a moment stood petrified with terror, trying to catch his words, but could not hear distinctly or understand his utterances. Gliding back up the long hall, into the doorway of the room, they saw that he had risen upon one elbow, and was looking wildly at Lady Hawren, who was hovering over him. As Kathryn and Flora entered, he sank back and expired instantly.

How shocked they were! Doctor Godkins, the Bishop of Ely, and the friends were hastily summoned from the banquet. Lady Hawren was carried from the room, almost swooning.

Questioning Mr. Crowningshield, the Doctor discovered that his patient had started up from a profound sleep, in great excitement; but Mr. Crowningshield did not understand what had caused the excitement, for he had but momentarily stepped into the next room, and heard the Earl cry out, as if starting up from a bad or exciting dream.

The Doctor, after a slight examination, declared the Earl's death was caused by some undue mental excitement, which, in his delicate state, had caused symmetrical dilatation of the heart and its valves, or preternatural dilatation of an artery.

The whole castle was thrown into consternation; for, though the Earl had been only slightly ill for a

few days, no one was expecting a fatal result from his illness.

A messenger was forthwith posted to Weirwolf to notify the young Baron, who would now succeed to the Earldom of Fleetwood. Splendid preparations were at once ordered for the obsequies, to be held on the second day thence. The Bishop of Ely was to remain and participate in their sorrows, as well as to take part in conducting the funeral rites, which were to be observed in the chapel of the castle with much pomp and splendor. There would be many eulogies and elaborate oraisons, according to the ritual of the church.

The body of the noble Earl of Fleetwood was placed on an imposing catafalco, and borne to the chapel; thence, after the obsequies, to the family vault beneath, and there deposited to await the final awakening.

A multitude of relatives, friends and retainers followed the catafalco as the body was borne to its last resting-place, for all had loved the noble old Earl, who for so many years, with a liberal hand, had upheld the dignity of the family, and built up the fine old estate of Fleetwood.



CHAPTER X.

A CONFESSION.

"I do not fear to follow out the truth,
Albeit along the precipice's edge."

It had been fondly hoped by some, yet by others feared, that the young Earl would arrive in time to be present at the obsequies; but, with all the expectations, the young man failed to make his appearance.

One morning, a few days later, before the ladies had gone down, Annie entered Lady Hawren's boudoir and found her Ladyship ready to descend for breakfast. Approaching, she placed her arms around her waist, saying:

"Dear Lady Hawren, I fear there is something wrong going on here. On waking quite early this morning, and feeling a little disquieted, I rose and began to walk the floor. On walking back to the window of my dressing-room, which looks out over the kitchen garden, back of Mrs. Macleod's apartments and down the path leading through the west park, I saw a villainous-looking man come out of one of the rooms—I'm sure, of the housekeeper's apartments. Casting a glance around, as if to assure himself that he was not seen, he slunk off down the pathway leading through the park."

"How you astonish me, Annie!" cried Lady Hawren. "Of what appearance was he?"

"Oh, a great, burly, dark, rugged-looking man; roughly clad and heavily armed with pistols and knives. I felt it my duty to tell you, Lady Hawren; I knew not what else to do."

"You did right, Annie. Poor Mrs. MacLeod is a sorrowful-looking woman, and must have seen great trouble, but—but— Oh, I must speak to her of this; she must explain the appearance of an armed man leaving her apartments so early in the morning."

"He had the appearance of a robber, a smuggler, or some such outlandish villain, as I have read of," said Annie.

"And Gaston left last evening, to be gone some time—he said to take charge of his new estate. And Mr. Crowningshield is in Carlisle, engaged in closing up the business and adjusting matters for the arrival of the young Earl."

"Oh, Lady Hawren! He—the villain—must have

known that both were absent. Think of it! We might all have been murdered in our beds."

"Annie, let me admonish you; speak not of this to anyone until I see what Mrs. Macleod has to say—what explanation she can give of this unheard-of proceeding."

After breakfast, Lady Hawren proceeded directly to the housekeeper's sitting-room. Mrs. Macleod looked unusually annoyed and distressed, Lady Hawren thought, as she seated herself and said:

"Close the door, Mrs. Macleod, please; I wish to have a private conversation with you, and do not wish to be disturbed."

"Certainly, my Lady," she said, closing the door, and seating herself near a small table.

"Mrs. Macleod, there was seen this morning a heavily armed man—a vicious-looking person—leaving one of your apartments. Lord Graeme is not here, neither Mr. Crowningshield, and before saying anything to Mr. Langhorn about it, I deemed it best to enquire of you if you know anything of this person being on the premises last night. I wish you to answer me truly, for your future—your good name—your reputation is at stake. It was not I who saw him, but another. This is most atrocious; it is villainous! Mrs. Macleod, I have always held you in the highest esteem, and assure you it hurts me very much to be forced to look upon you as any other than a pure, honest woman."

Mrs. Macleod dropped over on the table beside her, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed wildly and uncontrollably for a time; then, raising herself, she looked Lady Hawren full in the face, with honest eyes.

"Lady Hawren," she said, "I have suffered enough! Oh, my Lady! You can never know the agony I have endured! The life that I am living is worse

than death, and, since you have asked it of me, I must make a clean breast of it—a clean confession, even though I hang for it; for I suppose it will be no less than that. But death—any kind of death—is preferable to the miserable life I have lived for sixteen years. But, dear Lady, do not for one moment allow the thought to enter your mind that my private life is bad, for I can assure you that you can fall into no greater error than that, though the circumstance may from the first glance appear to condemn me. It was my brother who was seen leaving one of my rooms this morning. I am an honest woman, and must tell all, even though he should be captured—he must look to himself for the future, for I can conceal his wickedness, his comings and goings, no longer.” She wept again, and Lady Hawren sat like a marble statue, so miserable she felt. “I have so often told him that he must stay away from this place, but he has a hold on me by which he extorts from me every cent of money I receive, except barely enough to clothe myself and daughter.”

“You have had a most liberal salary.”

“Oh, yes, my Lady! Lady Margaret, your grandmother, kept me with her as companion and payed me most liberally, and since her death the good Earl has paid me a good salary; but it has all gone to my brother Donald Dhu, captain of a brig. He has made it a point to stop in here three or four times each year and extort from me every cent of it.”

“Dear Mrs. Macleod, you have had your share of trouble!” Lady Hawren rose, and went over and placed her hand upon Mrs. Macleod’s shoulder, in a tender and sympathetic manner, and continued: “But how could he have ever gotten such a hold on you?”

“Oh, dear Lady, that is the hard part of it. But I must confess it all, for I shall never have another moment of peace with this weighty burden upon me.

Sixteen years ago I lived in a cottage on the Hawren estate, just on the coast—for the Hawren estate takes in the coast of the Firth of Clyde for many miles. My husband, Robert Macleod, was an awfully wicked man. I married him in perfect ignorance of his real character. I knew that he was captain of a sailing vessel, but never dreamed that he was an outlaw—a smuggler. We had been married something over a year when he told me he would be compelled, for safety, to flee to the West Indies, and must take me with him, for it would be dangerous for him to ever return to that place, and I would be obliged to remain with him there in the future. I could not consent to go and leave Lady Margaret Hawren, who was my best friend, and had shown me so much kindness, for I had been in her home for years previous to my marriage; and after I found that he was an outlaw, fleeing from justice, I felt that I would rather die than go with him—a pirate—to a foreign country. He and my brother had made every arrangement for our departure; the brig stood off coast, ready to sail, when they came and announced to me that I must hasten to go with them. I told them that I would not go. Captain Macleod grew angry, and swore that I should go. I told him if he would, he might go; I would take my child and go to Lady Hawren, who had ever been a friend to me; that he had deceived me, and I wished never to see him more. Oh, Lady, how unhappy I was! He stooped down and took up my little fair-haired Flora, saying cruelly, 'Then stay if you will; I will take the babe!' Oh, my Lady, I was crazed! Like a tigress robbed of her young, I sprang upon him with a shriek. Then I knew no more of what took place, but for weeks lay in a delirium, with brain fever. Lady Margaret sent over physician and servants to attend me, and often came over herself. When consciousness again re-

turned to me, husband and brother were gone, but there—oh, thank God!—was my babe, my little fair-haired Flora. I was quite happy when I realized that he had gone and had left my child. When I was able to be moved, Lady Hawren took us to her home, and after I was again quite strong, gave me the position of housekeeper.

“One evening, just about a year after they had left, my brother came secretly in. We had a long talk. He told me that Captain Macleod was dead; that the vessel had been wrecked. He was destitute, had not decent clothing, and asked me to give him money. I told him that I could not help a man who was an outlaw to his country. He then told me that, my Lady, which has ruined my life and has turned my hair white as cotton.” As she said this she removed a little net cap lined with black silk, which she always wore scrupulously close around her hair. “My hair has been white since that awful night.”

“Oh, my good woman!” cried Lady Hawren. “What could he have told you to cause you so much distress?”

“Lady Hawren, it may cost me my life, but I must tell it to you. He said: ‘Martha, you remember the night when we were leaving, and Captain Macleod took up the little Flora to leave you?’ ‘You may know I do, sir,’ said I, indignantly. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘do you know what you did then?’ ‘No, I know nothing after I sprang upon him like a fury.’ ‘Fury! I should say so!’ said he, looking down. ‘Do you know that you picked up an iron poker and felled him to the floor, dead as a beef?’ Now I screamed! I knew nothing of it. Oh, Lady; I killed my husband! My brother told me that I struck my husband and he fell dead at my feet. Then he left me, in a dead faint, and took my husband’s body to the boat that stood waiting to carry me away from my home and

friends, and put out to the vessel, where they buried it in the sea. He then told me that if it ever became known, that I would be hanged for murder. After frightening me almost to death, he said no one knew of it but himself. Then I urged him to leave and never to return, but he said he needed money, and must have it, or he could not leave. I then gave him all the money I had, for I had been saving up some, to buy winter clothing for myself and babe. Oh, my Lady! he left me then, but has been coming back at intervals for more, and keeps me closely pinched all the time, although I receive an abundant salary. Now, Lady, you know all my sorrows, and if I must be given up to justice, it must be even so. For myself I care not. But oh, I did so wish to shield my child, my little Flora, from the sorrow and disgrace that would fall upon her."

"Oh, my poor woman; you have my warmest sympathy!" said Lady Hawren, sitting by her side and holding her hand in her own soft and velvety ones. "You need have no fears for your secret; it is just as safe with me as it was locked in your own breast. I will never reveal it, I promise you. I do not believe it could possibly be proven against you, and you yourself do not know that you committed the deed. No; let it rest! Your brother may be imposing upon you in order to extort money. Even if it is true, you did not intend it; it was not premeditated."

"No, no, Lady; it never once entered my mind," the poor woman said, all a-tremble from excitement and distress.

"Come, now Mrs. MacLeod, and lie down on your bed. You are over-much excited, and nearly exhausted. I will sit here beside you. Let me replace your cap, and cover again these sorrow-stricken locks," and Lady Hawren adjusted the little black cap over the white hair, as she said: "Look to your

heavenly Father for comfort. He is able to forgive all and send sweet peace to your troubled soul." Her manner was gentle and soothing.

"Oh, my Lady; I could never have lived through all these years had it not been for the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit."

The poor, distressed woman closed her eyes and wept awhile in silence. Then she said:

"Lady Hawren, begging your Ladyship's pardon, I feel that I must say to you that, whatever my brother is now, he is in the employ of my Lord Graeme, and has been for a number of years. My Lord owns the brigantine of which my brother is captain, and often makes voyages with him—is even now gone on such a trip—that is, they were to start this morning, quite early. This is as much as I can say. It may be that my brother's business is now more honorable than it was formerly," she said, with a long-drawn sigh.

"Is it possible! Can it be that Gaston—Lord Graeme—would embark in such questionable business?"

"Dear Lady, I cannot say that it is so! But when my brother comes ashore his time is all spent with my Lord Graeme, except when he comes to force from me all the money I have. His visits are all made in secret, and Lord Graeme never leaves here in company with my brother, but usually, as in the present instance, leaves the evening previous."

"This is something to think of. Oh, how fearful! Methinks I know too much now!" exclaimed Lady Hawren, walking the floor and wringing her hands.

"My Lady, pardon me for saying aught to disturb your composure; I trust there's nothing wrong. My brother is a good sea captain. It may be only a merchantman of which he has control now. Let us

think no evil of my Lord, for we cannot be positive of any wrong doing."

"Mrs. Macleod, I will go now," said Lady Hawren, very much excited, "and if you should need me, let me know! You are not well; pray lie and rest yourself awhile. I will see Miss Hamilton, and explain to her that it was your brother whom she saw this morning leaving your apartment, for it was she who saw him."

"Thank you; oh, thank you! I owe you so much! Ah, you are so like Lady Margaret—so kind-hearted; so good."



CHAPTER XI.

THE YOUNG EARL OF FLEETWOOD.

"The furious barb snorts fire and foam;
And, with a fearful bound,
Dissolves at once in empty air,
And leaves her on the ground."

Now the first days of September were flooding the hills of Fleetwood with great beauty and magic-like changes. Six weeks have elapsed since the funeral of the late Earl of Fleetwood.

Lady Kathryn donned her riding habit, of dark-green cloth, and, adjusting her jaunty hat, well laden with long black plumes, over her brown-gold hair, ran lightly down the broad stone steps leading out toward the stables. After reaching the gate at the foot of the garden, she called:

"Kibbie! Kibbie!" Then, raising a small silver whistle to her lips, she blew a keen, sharp blast. Presently Kibbie Kent—her own groom—made his appearance.

"Kibbie, get our horses. It is, I believe, a solid month since I rode out, and I am fairly pining to mount Black Prince again. Be in a hurry, Kibbie; someone may stop me now, before I can get off. I will walk a little here in the garden while you are getting ready, and do not for the world, Kibbie, let anyone know that we are going; we'll mount from the gate here, and not go to the front."

"Yes, my Lady," said Kibbie Kent, as he sprang with alacrity to do her bidding, for he was ever ready to attend her.

"It's outrageous!" cried Kathryn, walking up and down, but keeping close along the garden wall, well behind the shrubbery. "Here I have been mewed up in this old castle for positively a month, with nothing but teachers and books; study this, and study that! And above all, the undesirable attentions of the ever-present Lord Graeme. Persecution? Mercy! I would not have him find me here for the world; he would insist on going with me, and I positively could not endure that! He is so lordly, too, and acts for all the world as if he owned the place. And mother would not allow me to go out any distance attended only by Kibbie; for she believes all the stories we hear of bands of thieves, gypsies, brigands and all kinds of ruffians, who are said to be hiding in caves, mountains and glens. I defy them all! Am bound to mount Black Prince again, and away. Now here is Kibbie-boy, with the horses."

Skipping through the gate, she closed it after her; then, mounting, they set forth. Wishing to avoid observation, she shunned the main avenue leading from the front, and chose the way through the park and chase. Crossing the small river at a shallow ford, and skirting a valley, they soon reached the main road leading to Carlisle.

"Now we have eluded their vigilance, I shall make

straight for yonder high point, Kibbie. What is it called? Is there a name for it?"

"That, my Lady, is Fairy Fell."

"Is it on this road, or shall we have to turn off to reach it? To think of it, as long as I have been here I have never traversed this roadway since the evening of our arrival, but have always gone in another direction!"

"It is just at the turn of the road, my Lady, where the road forks; one leads to Carlisle, the other to Hawdon Manor, hidden from your view by the high point ye speak of," replied Kibbie.

What a picture of spirited, dashing loveliness she presented; with how much ease and grace she sat her fine, fiery black barb; and how she did take in long draughts of the delightfully fresh air.

She had been kept close to her studies all spring and summer; for since the Earl's sickness and death the house had been in mourning—all had been very quiet. The young Earl had not yet made his appearance, and everything was at a standstill, awaiting his arrival, before any decision was made as to the future.

Kathryn and Kibbie now arrived at Fairy Fell, and, ascending a gentle slope, soon had a fine view of the valley, the river winding its way to the firth, and Hawdon Manor-house, on the river bank, nestling amid a rich growth of oaks, beech, and birch.

The scene was charming—so much so that Kathryn did not see, being absorbed, a splendid coach, attended by a cavalcade, approaching from the direction of Carlisle.

"Now, Kibbie, I will descend on this side to the road," she said, starting down the steep declivity.

"'Deed, my Lady, 'tis pretty steep down this side," said Kibbie.

Notwithstanding the precipitous way, they proceeded quite well until within a few paces of the roadway, when Black Prince stepped on a loose boulder. Losing his foothold, the noble steed struggled bravely to regain his equipoise, but his momentum being so great and the declivity so abrupt, after a gallant struggle he lost his equilibrium, and went down, rolling over and over, until he reached the level ground by the roadside. And poor Kathryn; where was she?

When the stone rolled under Prince's foot, he was thrown forward with so much force that she flew, swiftly as a hawk upon its prey, over his head, alighting on both hands; then, rolling over, she lay "like one that had been stunned." It happened that the horse in his tumble just missed her, or she must have been crushed.

The gilded coach, turning an angle, came in sight just as Black Prince stumbled; so the occupants of the coach had a view of the fearful spectacle. The coachman pulled up.

"Guy! Rorey! Run! Great heavens, the young lady must be killed!"

"Oh, my Lord, was not that a fearful plunge?" cried Guy Brignol, as Lord Clifton hastily descended from the old royal coach with Guy, and Rorey following.

"See to the horse, Ambrose!" cried Louis, galloping up. "That is Black Prince; aye, and there's Kibbie Kent! It is some lady from the Castle, so it is, by my life!"

The Earl ran hastily and raised her gently in his arms.

"I fear she has fainted. Run, Rorey! Send someone to the streamlet around the clump of hawthorne there for a little water—— Guy, there's wine in the pouch inside the foot of the coach! Fetch some wine,

Louis. Hither, quickly! Hurry; do, boys, I fear she's badly hurt."

Guy, Louis and Rorey scurried off to fetch wine and water—anything.

Kathryn had not fainted—was only stunned; and presently she opened her eyes and, looking straight up into his clear blue ones, she recognized her knight-of-the-golden-locks, whom she had met on the highway.

The recognition was mutual, for Lord Clifton had, since that meeting, often dreamed of the lovely face which he had so unexpectedly met with, yet he knew not who she was. Now gazing into her dark-brown eyes, which he had never been able to forget, he cried:

"Dear lady, I fear you have sustained serious injuries."

"I think not, sir; surely not! I feel no pain, thank you."

Shrinking, with maiden delicacy, from the position in which she found herself, she struggled to free herself from his arms. Appreciating the effort, he rose to his feet—though he felt that he could sit there forever, holding her to his breast—and on taking her hand to assist her to rise, she shrieked out with pain.

"Oh, what—what is it, dear lady?"

"My arm! My wrist! Oh—oo!"

"Surely it is not broken!" he cried, solicitously.

"Oh—oh—oo!" she moaned. Taking her right hand, he gently and very tenderly drew off her riding glove.

"Oh! Oh! My wrist——"

"It is, then, your wrist—a sprain! Thank God it is not a fracture; nor subluxation," said the young Earl, fervently, holding her soft hand in his and examining it carefully.

Now the others gathered around with water and wine, which were not required.

"Permit me, dear Lady, to see you home in the coach; you cannot mount again." They led her to the coach, and assisted her to a seat among the soft cushions.

"Louis, let one of the boys mount Black Prince; he does not appear to be much injured, does he?" asked the Earl, as he took a seat beside Lady Kathryn.

"Not in the least, I assure your Lordship; not in the least. You could not hurt Black Prince; he bounces like a trap-ball," returned Louis.

Kathryn was no little astonished that all seemed to know Black Prince so well. Now, sitting by her side, the young Earl insisted on holding her wrist in his hand, to prevent its being irritated by the motion of the coach.

"We will take you home, lady, and one of the boys will ride your horse. Where shall I direct the driver to go?"

"Oh——" she cried, as her arm gave her a sharp pain. "I am Kathryn Arranton, from Fleetwood Castle."

"MacDougal, drive on to Fleetwood," called Guy to the coachman, as he and Rorey seated themselves opposite the Earl and Kathryn.

"I was pretty well assured that you were from Fleetwood, my Lady, by your horse and attendant," said the Earl, as the horses started off briskly. And he regarded her dainty fingers, as her wrist lay so gently in his palm.

"You know Lady Hawren, then; I suppose you are one of her followers," said the Earl.

"Lady Hawren is my mother, sir," replied Kathryn, her face all aglow with pleasure as she glanced at his handsome face and wondered how he knew anything of her mother, and who he could possibly be.

"You are the daughter of Lady Hawren!" he exclaimed, taking in her beautifully regular features, then looking at Guy, as if to say, "where is the large nose, Guy, of which you spoke."

"Yes, sir," said Kathryn, softly, as their eyes met.

"You are Lady Hawren's daughter!" he repeated, incredulously. "Then, may I not claim relationship with you, since Lady Hawren is my cousin—I beg your pardon, however, Lady Kathryn—my cousin—for not introducing myself and friends sooner, but your poor wrist," he said, looking into her eyes, which caused her face to flush beautifully, "engaged all my attention. I am Robert Clifton, and by the death of my grandfather, the late Earl, am Earl of Fleetwood, now on my way to Fleetwood Castle, after a long absence. Guy—Mr. Brignol—this is my cousin, Lady ——" Kathryn groaned and attempted to remove her hand from his clasp. "Oh!" he cried, holding it tenderly, "does it pain you so?" Once again their eyes met, but now he was astonished at the expression of anguish in hers; her face grew white as death as she fell back in a death-like swoon. He placed his arm about her and held her up against his shoulder, crying:

"Guy, help! Rorey, do something—get something. She has swooned!" The Earl was wild with anxiety.

"Here, my Lord," allow me to hold her wrist while you support her head against your shoulder, to ease it against the motion of the coach."

"Yes, Guy, hold it carefully; pray do not hurt it," and, placing his left hand around her head, he pressed it close against his shoulder, while Guy took her wrist most tenderly between both his hands.

"Oh, if we only had some restorative!" cried the Earl.

"My Lord, I happen to have a little Eau de Cologne

about me," said Rorey, drawing from his pocket a small bottle of Cologne water.

"Rorey is decidedly feminine in his tastes, my Lord; I observe he ever carries some article of the feminine toilet about his person," said Guy, smiling on Rorey.

"And here, my Lord, is a perfectly clean Cambric," Rorey continued. "Shall I pour a little on it, and apply it?"

"Yes, yes; instantly; how nice of you, lad!"

"Aha! Now, Rorey, that bit of fine linen, laced all around," said Guy, banteringly, in an undertone.

"Mother likes to have me use dainty things, and she placed it in my pocket on starting from home."

"Guy," said the Earl, "speak to Louis and bid him dispatch Kibbie for Doctor Godkins, that he may reach the castle as soon as possible, that something may be done for her poor wrist. The pain must have been intense to cause a syncope. And tell MacDougal to drive up more rapidly." Rorey continued to apply the handkerchief with the Eau de Cologne, and Guy said, after having spoken to Louis:

"This proves clearly, Rorey, that you are sentimental—fond of the fair sex; or at least that you have a penchant for dainty trifles of Milady's dressing table."

"They are gentle, sweet creatures, Master Guy," said Rorey, blushing like any girl.

"You are in your adolescence, boy, and have not yet cause, on account of one of these 'sweet creatures,' to wish that you had never been born."

"I trust, Guy, that I never shall," he replied, again drenching the handkerchief with his favorite perfume and applying it to Kathryn's nose.

"A dainty hand," observed Guy, just above a whisper, as he looked on the little hand resting so limp in his own.

"Aye, delicately moulded; and a well-rounded arm," returned Rorey.

"A model which the old Greek masters might have envied," said Guy.

"Sweeping lashes and arching eyebrows," observed Rorey.

"Aye, and teeth of dazzling whiteness, velvety skin, and a profusion of dark-brown hair," said Guy, admiringly.

"She sighs ; see, she is coming round !" cried Rorey, with delight, still applying his restorative.

Her returning consciousness was manifested by a sigh, deep-drawn, as from the inmost recess of her heart. Lord Clifton, holding her face close against his shoulder, looked down on her marble-like cheeks. Slowly her eyes opened, and she looked straight up in his face, while a hot flush suffused her cheeks. As consciousness once more asserted its sway, she remembered what he had said ; that he was the Earl of Fleetwood—the despised one whom she had hoped never to meet, to prove to be her knight-of-the-golden-locks, whose image she had cherished in her heart with a wild dream of delight. The soft light in her eyes changed to a look of anguish, even while he gazed into their depths. Haughtily she drew herself away from his supporting arms, far back into the corner of the seat, holding her wrist in her own hand, sitting bolt upright, with the dignity of a queen, with a crimson face and a pained and indignant expression. Now a heavy groan escapes her lips.

The Earl, with manifest sympathy, said, in the most winning voice, and with the most charming address :

"My dear cousin, what great pain you must suffer to cause you to——" Another groan. "Pray, allow me to hold your wounded arm again ; the motion of the carriage is too much for you."

"No, I thank you," she said, icily, holding it still closer to her body. "We must be nearing the castle now."

"Oh, yes, yes, my poor little cousin; we'll soon reach the castle, where you will have attention. I have sent a runner for a physician, who will soon arrive," and, putting his head out the window, he said:

"Louis, dash forward now with the four outriders and herald our approach." Then to Kathryn he said:

"I trust, dear cousin, the physician may soon arrive, and that you may have relief. You have my warmest sympathy."

"Thank you, my Lord," she replied, with the utmost dignity; "I trust I shall not require his service."

The Earl was much distressed by her demeanor, and was at a great loss to know how to account for the change which he so plainly perceived had come over her. At the park gate the Earl, looking forth, spoke most kindly to the keeper of the lodge, and threw him a broad gold-piece. They approached rapidly, and had a glorious view of the castle, as the rays of the setting sun threw a halo over all, illuminating the battlements and displaying the rugged front in crimson and gold. A St. George's banner was flung to the breeze, and floated proud and gay from the donjon tower.

Louis, with his four followers, had put spurs to their horses, and, dashing forward, soon reached the castle gate, where he blew a blast from his bugle-horn. At this the great iron-studded gate swung open. Entering the great courtyard, they cried:

"Make room! Make room for the noble Lord Clifton, Baron of Weirwolf and Earl of Fleetwood. Make way! Make way for the entrance of the noble Earl!" And as the magnificent glass-quartered coach, with its six superb black horses, swept over the draw-bridge, and passed under the potcullis, the old cannon from the ramparts gave them a thundering welcome, and from the minstrels' trumpets bravely came a blythe salute in martial music.

The officers of the household, with the staff of servants, had gathered in the courtyard to give welcome to the new Earl, with his cavalcade of twenty fine yeomen, all bearing arms of Weirwolf, and they entered with much clang and clatter.

Now Fleetwood's heralds came forth, gaudily dressed in tabards, with back-sword, sword and buckler, and single falchion. Taking their stand on the ends of the great stone steps leading from the great hall, they loudly flourished their trumpets, proclaiming the arrival of the noble Earl of Fleetwood: "Make way! Make way for the noble Earl of Fleetwood!" was the universal cry; the words rang through the old castle from basement to turret.

The servants crowded around; the great glass doors were thrown open. Guy and Rorey sprang lightly to the ground and held the door open for the Earl, who now descended and carefully assisted Lady Kathryn to alight. With a purse well filled with "broad gold-pieces," Louis dispensed, for the Earl, largess on all the old servants of the place, who had been so long a time in the employ of his Lordship's grandfather. The donations were received with the applause common on such occasions, and as the Earl passed through the courtyard, the cry everywhere was:

"Health!" "Honor!" "Long life to the noble Earl of Fleetwood!"

As they neared the great stone steps at the entrance, the poursuivants hailed him, "Lord of Clifton; Baron of Weirwolf, and Earl of Fleetwood." The inmates of the castle, in pursuit of different diversions and occupations, scattered here and there, as the first notes of the bugle-blast were given by Louis at the gate, had instantly divined the cause; then at the booming of the cannon and the sound of martial music, all rushed to the great hall, to give welcome to the young Earl.

At the entrance of the great hall the Earl was met

by Mr. Crowningshield, who shook his hand most cordially, and welcomed him with an expression of great joy. He was then warmly greeted by Mrs. Macleod, and as Flora bounded forward, he caught her in his arms and kissed her rosy cheek as if she had been his sister.

There were many exclamations of surprise on finding Kathryn in company with the Earl. She turned to Mr. Crowningshield and told him of her accident and the painful injury she had sustained. Mr. Crowningshield, after introducing the Earl to Lady Hawren, who now entered the hall, followed by the other ladies, offered his arm to Lady Kathryn, and led her to the drawing-room, where she reclined in a great chair, attended by Marie and Hortense.

Lady Hawren expressed much pleasure in meeting her young relation, giving him a most hearty welcome; and he, with courtly grace, being charmed with her, gave her a cousinly salute. She presented him to Mrs. Edmonds and Miss Hamilton. Then the young Earl was conducted to his apartments, and the others, entering the drawing-room, gathered around Kathryn, asking, with much solicitude, all manner of questions, which she declined to answer, referring them for explanation to the young Earl, for she averred she was not cognizant of what had transpired.

Just then there was another arrival. Flora ran to the great hall to meet Doctor Godkins, and said:

"Oh, Doctor, I am so glad you have come; do come in."

"How is this, Fairy; how is this? I thought you had your arm broken, and here I am come to set your broken bones and you meet me all smiling and bright as an angel."

"Oh, no, Doctor; you've been misinformed! It is not I, but Lady Hawren's daughter who has been hurt, and yet, her arm is not broken, I think."

"Not your arm, my flower, but Lady Kathryn's—and not broken? Come, come! What can you know about it? Have you studied surgery, and know a broken bone from a contusion? Come, lead me to the lady's presence."

"She is not seriously hurt, I assure you, sir!" said Flora, as she placed her hand on the Doctor's arm and led him into Kathryn's presence.

Doctor Godkins examined carefully her injured arm, which was now much swollen, and quite blue from bruised blood.

"My dear young lady, you have suffered some severe contusions, but we will speedily have it properly—— Ah, there now; thank you, Mrs. Macleod, that is just what we wanted!"—as Mrs. Macleod entered with a hot poultice. "Yet, let me first splint it just a little, then we will apply the cataplasm," he said, deftly working away.

"Oh, Doctor, is it broken?" asked Gaston, anxiously, on seeing the doctor applying the splints, as he hastily entered the room.

"Oh, no, my Lord—— How do you do, sir? And where have you been all this time?—— No, it is only a subluxation of the non-osseous parts of the joint, without fracture or displacement of the bones; no serious lesion of the ligaments or tendons, my Lord. I am only splinting it for mechanical support." Now he bound on the warm poultice. "Ah, my Lady, I assure you this steaming fomentation will have a speedy effect; you will find it most grateful, and it will soon relieve you of the pain which is now causing you to groan so piteously. Thank you, Mrs. Macleod, thank you, Madam!"

He glanced enquiringly about the room, then said to Annie, who stood near: "Miss Hamilton, I will appoint you nurse, seeing that the young lady's mother has disappeared. When the fomentation cools, please

to remove it," and, pouring out some fluid in a bowl of water, he continued: "And use this lotion freely. She must have perfect rest. If the pain is excessive, then, Miss Hamilton, give her ten drops of this—a gentle narcotic"—handing her a vial.

Gaston, who had been out bird-hunting on the Earl's arrival, had met him, on his return, in the back court, where he was greeting some of the old servants, and expressed the most sincere pleasure at his return home, and regretted so much that he had happened to be absent on his arrival, and asked earnestly: "What has kept you away so long, my Lord, when we were so anxiously expecting you?"

"Cousin, your message arrived at Weirwolf three days after my departure thence for London, where I was admitted to a seat in the House of Peers, as I was chosen last July as representative peer. A messenger was dispatched from Weirwolf to London, but on his arrival I had gone with His Majesty's escort to Windsor. It appeared that I should never receive the sad tidings of the death of my grandfather, but after my return to London. I received the message, and set out immediately; but, my Lord, you know what a long and fatiguing journey it is, and, owing to circumstances, I was forced to continue my journey on to Weirwolf before coming here. I cannot say how much I regretted not being with my grandfather in his last days."

Gaston, now hearing of Kathryn's accident, hastened to her, as we have already seen, making many enquiries as to her adventure; but she declined to satisfy his curiosity. Still he hung over her with much solicitude, and with the manner and appearance of an accepted lover.

Annie told him that the Earl had brought her home in his coach; then he was wild to know all about it, but Kathryn, with inflexible determination, yielded not.

She had prided herself on her horsemanship, and was no little mortified at her mishap, besides being almost heart-broken on discovering her knight-of-the-golden-locks to be—"Oh!"—she groaned; and covered her face with her hand, feeling that she must swoon again at the thought.

Lady Hawren had stepped into the library, where she found the Earl, who stood gazing around him with a sad, preoccupied air. He was much grieved, remembering his grandfather, and the manner in which he had been so suddenly turned against him; his dying without a reconciliation. The timid knock at the half-open door startled him. He turned and, seeing Lady Hawren, cordially invited her in.

"My Lord," she said, "I fear I am intruding on you at a time when, perhaps, you would prefer to be alone."

"No, no, dear Lady Hawren; I am truly glad to have your company," he said, offering her a chair.

"I knew you were in grief for your grandfather," she said, seating herself, and he took a chair near her; "and thought it but right that I should give you what relief and comfort I could, without delay, by letting you know what he appeared to discover, and what he said at the moment of his death."

"Dear Lady Hawren, if you can relieve my mind in the least I shall appreciate your kindness; for I assure you I have suffered much."

"My Lord, if you would let me take the place of your Aunt Margaret, and would just call me aunt, I should feel much more at my ease."

"Oh, may I do so? How very kind of you, and how grateful am I to have you take the place of my dear Aunt Margaret! I assure you I shall so love to do so if you are truly willing, my dear aunt."

"Why certainly! It would please me much. But I want to relieve your mind by relating to you what oc-

curred just at his death. I never left his bedside, neither day nor night, except momentarily, after he became ill, until the end came; and it came unexpectedly to all. I urged him, when first he was taken sick, to send for you and forgive anything he might hold against you—for he had told me of your estrangement—but he would not listen to me for a moment.”

“Dear Aunt, I appreciate your kindness in making the effort,” he said, sorrowfully.

“I sat beside him, giving him all the comfort I had in my power to give. Doctor Godkins attended him, and we had the Bishop of Ely, his Lordship’s cousin, with him, besides our Rector, our Chaplain and many nobles coming and going. But just at the moment of his death there were no others in the room but Mr. Crowningshield, Mrs. Macleod, myself, Flora and Kathryn, who stood behind my chair. He appeared to be resting well, and dozed off into a sweet sleep. No one expected the end so soon. He slept sweetly for awhile; then suddenly he started up, raised himself on his elbow, and gazed wildly about the room. Then, fixing his eyes on me, he exclaimed: ‘Clifton! Clifton! Oh, my poor boy! Would to God he were here, that I might make reparation! How I have wronged him! Oh, that I had listened to your admonition, Louise! It is false! He has been maligned—cruelly wronged—the noble boy; forgive, oh, forgive me, Clift——’ He sank back, with your name on his lips, and breathed no more.”

The young Earl, who had bowed his head on his hands, wept. Then, rising, he clasped her hand, saying, as she now also rose: “Dear aunt, what a blessed relief and comfort you have offered me. Allow me to thank you for this blessed assurance. I feel that words are inadequate to express my appreciation of your kindness to one so bowed down with grief and distress.”

"Clifton, I believe that your innocence was revealed to him from above; that he saw his mistake, but too late to make reparation," she said.

"I am very sorry, for he was so set against you that he changed his will after we came, leaving Redmond estate and all his money to Gaston; and all the rest of his personal property—chattels, everything not included in the entail—to Kathryn. He told me he would leave you nothing save just that which was yours by entail. I urged him to the contrary, but he became incensed each time I urged anything like a reconciliation with you. He even went so far as to request a marriage between Gaston and Kathryn, which I refused to listen to. On the next day after the obsequies, at the urgent request of Gaston, your grandfather's last will and testament was probated."

"What could have turned him so bitterly against me, my dear aunt? He always loved me devotedly until after my departure for Scotland."

"I could doubtless enlighten you on this subject, my Lord," she said, "but it would only prove to you that which you already know—that you have an enemy, or enemies, hereabout, who will not hesitate to do you great injury. My Lord, you have been vilely traduced, and your grandfather has been grossly imposed upon."

"I feel assured of that fact, my dear aunt, and am therefore greatly aggrieved."

"I am, my Lord, much disturbed on account of the will having been changed, so far as Kathryn is concerned. And there must be a restoration, on her part, of everything; for I know that, could our grandfather have had even an hour more of life, after the revelation came to him, he would have made reparation. There is not, in my mind, a particle of doubt of this. Besides, she will inherit the Hawren estate, and have an abundance of her own, without retaining what of

right should be yours, and she must, by a process of law, restore to you all the goods and chattels, personal effects, the stock and fine horses which should go to you with the freehold. It is unjust; it is robbing you, my Lord, to——”

“Never; never, dear aunt! Never, never shall this be done! If I do own the estates, and she the chattels, that suits me well! Maybe some time we—she and I—we may adjust the matter agreeably between ourselves,” he stammered, while a deep flush overspread his fair face; yet he looked straight into her eyes, as he continued: “My dear aunt, I must congratulate you. You have a most charming daughter, and—— We——”

“My Lord, you—— I fail to apprehend your meaning,” she replied, blushing like a girl. “Pray, explain; in what manner might you adjust this matter agreeably between yourselves?”

“If I might have your approval, I should be delighted—with your permission—to offer her my hand, even without the chattels, my dear aunt.”

“Oh, my Lord; surely you do but jest—you cannot be serious! Why, you have scarcely met!”

“We have met, though, and I assure you, dear aunt,” he said, becoming quite serious, “that I have not had a peaceful, nor perfectly quiet, moment since that first meeting. My heart was lost to her at one glance, as I passed you on the highway, something over eight months ago, on your journey hither. I knew not, at the time, who she was; nor could I discover; and was in despair of ever seeing her more, when, on nearing my home to-day, I descried a lady on the brow of Fairy Fell, mounted on Black Prince, a favorite horse of my grandfather’s, which I always preferred to ride, and chose to call my own; whom I recognized at once, as he stumbled and fell with her. I hastened to her assistance. What a wild thrill

of joy surged over my soul when I beheld her face and recognized in her the beautiful image who had haunted my dreams for so many hopeless months." He paused, looking eagerly in her face; then continued pleadingly: "Surely, dear aunt, you will not doom me to disappointment now, by withholding your approval!"

"Oh, my Lord; she is so young, and but a stranger to the world; yet I will not withhold my permission—your suit has my approval—but pray do not, my Lord, speak to her on the subject yet for awhile—she is young, and must complete her studies. I assure you, my Lord, I am much gratified, and feel that my daughter and myself are greatly honored by your offer."

"How can I ever thank you sufficiently, dearest aunt," he cried, radiant with joy, seizing her hand and covering it with kisses. "No, no!" he continued; "I am the one who receives the honor, and promise that I will be obedient to your wishes. I can afford to wait if I may at last win her love."

"Win her love! My dear sir, if you could know, as I do, how she has raved about her 'Knight-of-the-Golden-Locks' since the day you met on the highway, you would not anticipate much opposition on her part. But I know that I should not be telling you this," she returned, laughing heartily.

"Dearest aunt, you render me most happy," he cried, kissing her hand, which he still held in his warm clasp. "Oh, could you know how you have restored my soul since coming to this room! What an angel of peace you are! What a heaven you have opened to me! What hopes; what blissful contemplation! You are my Bona Dea!" He pressed her hand, kissed her cheek, and led her forth to the drawing-room. But as they went he asked anxiously:

"Dear aunt, are you sure there is no previous—no one in advance of me?"

"Rest assured, my Lord; there is no one in your way."

"Oh, aunt; I feel like a knight who has just received his accolade!"

As they entered the room Gaston, who was hanging about Kathryn, with an air of proprietorship, was saying:

"Tell us, cousin, how did all this happen?"

"Ah, here is Weirwolf, the young Earl, my Lady; he will tell us all, I'll warrant you, about this escapade of yours," said the doctor, as he shook hands warmly with Clifton, whom he had met and knew before his departure for Weirwolf. Kathryn was still reclining in the high-backed crimson-cushioned chair, her wrist well poulticed and resting in a sling. She was pale, but a slight flush suffused her cheeks as the Earl approached and asked, with manifest solicitude, and some confusion:

"I trust you are resting easier, my Lady. Do you still suffer so much?"

"I do rest easier, I thank your Lordship; it is nothing to speak of," she replied, with great dignity.

All had noted the happy expression on his face as he entered the room.

"No, doctor," he returned, "if the young lady, my cousin, is not willing to relieve your minds on the subject of the accident with which she has met, I shall respect her wishes; so I must decline to give you any account of the contretemps."

Kathryn gave him a grateful look, and said: "Thank you, my Lord."

Bowing, he seated himself nearby.

"How she came to be away from home, when all thought she was shut up in the study, is more than I can guess," said Annie, with a bright laugh.

The Earl turned on her a glance, and thought: "Oh,

ho, there is Guy's beauty"—recognizing her at once by Guy's description.

"If she had only let us know she was going out, here are plenty of us who would have been glad to accompany and protect her from such an adventure," said Gaston Graeme, regretfully.

"I was well aware of that fact," replied Kathryn, "and for that very reason I slipped away, wishing to be alone; solitude is preferable to——"

The young Earl observed that Kathryn did not complete her sentence. The others did not appear to do so; there was much conversation being carried on.

At this juncture Lord Phantomfell was announced. He was a neighbor and friend to the family, and had been invited over to dine with the young Earl, in company with Doctor Godkins, who had promised to remain to dinner.

Some hours later Kathryn had retired to her room, in obedience to the command of Doctor Godkins, who had said: "She must have all the quiet possible." Annie and Marie had undressed her and put her to bed. And after administering an opiate and freely bathing the wound in the cooling lotion given her by the doctor, Annie went down.

The folding doors of the great banqueting-hall were thrown open; a burst of sweet music greeted them. The Earl, with Lady Hawren, led the way. Placing her at the tea-tray, he then took his place at the opposite end of the table. Lord Phantomfell offered his arm to Annie, and they were followed by the others. A servant stood behind each chair, ready to seat the guests; the pages dressed for the occasion.

Louis, as squire, placed the guests according to their station. Gaston was placed on the Earl's left, and a place for Kathryn had been reserved on his right.

Mrs. Macleod, the steward and the butlers had

exerted themselves to the utmost to render the dining-room attractive, with the assistance of the gardener, who lent his aid with floral decorations.

The hall was brilliantly lighted; and bressel-cock, white hares and pheasants were served in great plenty. There was a variety of bread and fine fruits, ale and beer, and superb sparkling wines—Muscatel, fragrant and sweet.

Lady Hawren, with natural grace and ease, did the honors of the table. The meal was greatly enjoyed, for there was a flow of wit and humor, commingled with the conversation, which rendered it most pleasant, and after the grace-cup had been passed, the ladies rose and repaired to the drawing-room, where coffee was served, the men lingering around the table, where wine flowed freely among them.



CHAPTER XII.

CUPID'S CAPER.

"There are, who, darkling and alone,
Would wish the weary midnight gone,
Though dawning morn should only show
The secret of their unknown woe."

AT midnight, on her lonely bed, Kathryn tossed and moaned. Her arm truly gave her some pain, but oh, nothing to compare with the pain at her heart.

Beside her, on a unique stand, was one of those little *Lucernæ Cubiculariæ*, or bed-chamber lamps—a dainty little thing, fashioned of gold, and fanciful in its embellishments, on which she gazed. She had sent Marie away, preferring to be alone in her meditation, and she cried out in her anguish: "Oh, what agony to have recur to my mind all that my grandfather has said

of him! Is it possible? Can it be? So noble! So God-like—an Apollo in beauty of form and face! Such a perfect specimen of noble manhood! A personification of all that is noble, grand and beautiful! Oh, no! No! No! But my promise—my promise to the dead, which can never be retraced, but must stand firm as the Rock of Ages. Like the law of the Medes and Persians, it cannot be changed—— The bright masses of his hair fall like floating rays of light around his manly shoulders; in his brightly-beaming eye, what an expression of soft, warm, soul-stirring—— Oh! When I recovered my senses, after that dreadful tumble, I found myself in the arms, and looking straight up in the face, of him of whom, for months, I have so fondly dreamed, and there met a look of recognition in that soft glance of fire—and even more—oh, what bliss! Then what a death-knell to my heart, when he disclosed his name and claimed relationship. My poor heart died within me. I must have swooned, for next I knew my head reposed against his throbbing breast, his arms around me close. Oh, close he held me! I came near fainting again, the tumult in my breast was so great. Clifton! Clifton! Robert Clifton!” she murmured. Changing her position slightly, her head rested upon one arm; the other swathed in healing, balmy lotion, lay across her heaving bosom. A sigh escaped her parting lips; the fringed eyelids now tremble on her burning cheeks, and wearily she sinks to sleep, breathing that dear name.

Next morning Kathryn and Flora came, arm in arm, down the broad stairway. Seeing the others had already gone into the breakfast parlor, they followed on. The Earl, standing at the head of the table while the others were being seated, seeing them enter, turned to greet them, and said to Kathryn:

“How is my fair cousin this morning?”

"Comfortable, thank you, my Lord," she returned, with flushing face and a charming smile. With his own hands he seated her by his side, while Julien placed Flora in the chair next. Then a deadly pallor overspread Kathryn's face, a look of anguish came into her soft eyes, and, with quiet dignity and great decorum, she sipped her coffee and attempted to eat a few morsals of food. He quickly observed the change in her demeanor, and, not being able to account for it otherwise, attributed it to the pain she was suffering from her bruised arm, which she now carried close to her breast, swung in a pink scarf which was tied in a fluffy bow at the back of her neck.

Some hours later, Lord Clifton, in his dressing-room, in natural grace and elegance, reclined at his ease on a sofa near an open casement with deep recess, hung with shimmering silk and lace, and opening on an Italian veranda, where he might gaze out on the park, or, letting his view fall nearer, on the garden, now in all its glory; or on the neatly clipped yew hedge and parterre of brilliant flowers immediately beneath his window. His thoughts must have been pleasant, for a grateful smile lurked about his handsome mouth as he contemplated the tops of the trees in the park. No man ever possessed a more noble form or finer face—a face expressive of all that is pure and good. His ringlets of sunny hair fell over his shoulders; his dressing-robe of rich crimson silk, with ample sleeves and numerous clasps of carved gold, clung gracefully about his manly form. His apartment was sumptuous. The carving and ornamental woodwork was of the richest material, the furniture was quaint and of curious workmanship. Near him was a table of buhl-work, or marquetry, on which was a Sevres vase filled with fresh flowers, still wet with the dew of the morning. On one end of the

stone chimney-piece was a unique silver crucifix, on the other an elaborately carved ivory casket. A lovely old harp stood near the head of the couch on which he lay, and near this stood a tall candelabrum, from which depended an antique lamp of highly perfumed oil. The soft carpet, the curtains, the upholstery—all in Arabesque devices. Many fine paintings relieved the expanse of the handsome walls. There was repose in all his surroundings. He is musing:

“She is perfectly lovely! Classic figure, soft, luminous eyes, ruby lips, silken locks of soft brown hair; and her mother’s willing. Win her love! Did not her bright eyes flash lovingly into mine when she recognized me, at first, when I held her in my arms? Is not our love mutual; does not love speak from the eye? And but now, at breakfast, there was a charming light in her eye at first glance—but it faded; there was a change. What a cold dignity she assumed! That love-light faded away, and how suddenly cold she appeared afterward. Ah! it was the pain from her arm; she was suffering—— What a model of feminine grace and beauty—a perfection of feminine loveliness. Her color is like the fresh-blown lily—creamy, clear and beautiful; eyebrows long, dark and beautifully arched; long, curved lashes; her hair falls in Grecian waves. Who could have anticipated my good fortune in meeting and finding her to be an inmate of Fleetwood; ca——” A slight noise startles him, and, looking over his shoulder, he exclaimed, “Why Gaston!”

“Oh, my Lord; pardon. I dreamed not of disturbing your repose! I tapped gently at your sitting-room door and, supposing you heard me, made bold to enter and seek you in your dressing-room.” He stood in the doorway, still holding back the portieres which he had raised. He had, in truth, a prying nature, and had cautiously slipped in, the soft carpet giving no

sound to his tread. "I ask a thousand pardons, my Lord, for intruding and interrupting your meditations. I know they were of a most pleasing nature—but I will retire."

"Oh, pshaw, Gaston, be seated!" returned the Earl, the blood rushing to his face in a tell-tale manner. "No apologies are necessary. I expect you to make yourself at home with me, boy, and excuse me if I lie here," he said, stretching himself on his back and adjusting the cushions under his head in a most comfortable manner. "I feel a little exhausted after my hurried trip from London to Weirwolf, then from that place hither. Pray, be seated, Gaston."

But Gaston stood, leaning on a tall-backed chair, his arms folded across the top of it.

"My Lord, I suppose you must feel somewhat fatigued. It is a long and tiresome journey, even when one is not hurried. Anything new or interesting going on in London?" he asked.

"Why, no. The session of Parliament was short, and afterward I attended His Majesty to Windsor, where we remained some time."

"My Lord, I suppose, now that you are here to take charge of your own, it will not be necessary for me to remain longer, but my duty will be to repair at once to my own property—to Redmond Manor, or back to the Hermitage, with my uncle, Sir Gaston, and not impose myself on you. Since my grandfather is no more, I can no longer look upon this as my home."

"Not so, Gaston; it is not at all necessary for you to leave the place that has ever been your home—not at all, boy! You know that you are just as welcome to make your home here as ever you were in your life. We are older, now, Gaston; and I trust have passed over our childhood's follies, and may live together in peace and in much happiness."

"Thank you, my Lord; I greatly appreciate your kindness. It will be much more pleasant for me, I know, than to take up my abode at the lonely manor in Westmoreland, which you doubtless have heard that our grandfather kindly willed to me, with no one but servants about. I should die of ennui. My dear cousin, you do not know what a change has come over this old place with the coming of Lady Hawren and her fine ladies."

They are charming ladies, certainly. I admit I am captivated with the last one of them, and, as you say, it is a great change from the old régime."

"Lady Hawren is a regular beauty herself, my Lord—lovely and refined, as you doubtless have discovered. Miss Hamilton, my Lord—what think you of her?" Lord Graeme asked.

"Miss Hamilton? Oh, she's the dark one! She is majestic—carries herself well; moves with stately step; a small, firm mouth——"

"But a nose, my Lord, you must say, of some prominence; ah, too bad! But she is grand company."

"Mrs. Edmonds, Gaston, appears to be an elegant lady. She is splendid looking."

"Aye, my Lord, Crowningshield thinks so."

"Aye, truly?"

"Aye, my Lord; they are affianced."

"Truly? You are not giving away a secret, Gaston, I trust."

"Oh, no, my cousin, it has been an open secret for more than a month, and on last Sabbath the banns were published for the first time; and the nuptial rites, I think, are to be celebrated as soon as is convenient after the third publication of the banns—something over two weeks hence."

"And do they expect to be quietly married here in the chapel?"

"My Lord, I think so."

"Gaston, we must do better than that by Crowningshield. He has been the friend and confidential agent of our grandfather for many years. We must show him some appreciation for what he has been to us. Indeed, we must have a grand wedding, Gaston; such a wedding as will proclaim to the surrounding country the love and gratitude we owe to him. Crowningshield is a grand man, Gaston. I trust he is doing well."

"You believe in love, my Lord?"

"Aye, somewhat," replied the young man, blushing deeply.

"They are as loving as a pair of doves," returned Gaston, noting the roseate glow on the Earl's face; "besides," he continued, "she has a good plantation in America, which yields her a fine income."

"I suppose Crowningshield will tell me of it. Think you he intends to remain here?"

"He means to go to Liverpool and settle among his people. He thinks, of course, that Guy will take his place here, my Lord."

"Aye, aye, and so he will! I shall not require the service of both, and it is very well. Guy is a man of great ability, and has been with me so long I could not part with him. Crowningshield is happy?"

"Oh, just as much so as can be."

"He is a fine man, and has done well here with our grandfather; has rendered infinite service."

With some trepidation and confusion, Gaston proceeded to another subject, and asked:

"You know, my Lord, how grandfather—er—willed his property?"

Perfectly unmoved, the Earl replied:

"Yes, Crowningshield told me. We had a little conversation before retiring last night. He said the will had been probated; that you have Redmond, fifty thousand pounds sterling, and the bank stocks, etc. That

our cousin, Lady Kathryn, has Fairy Knoll, with all the goods and chattels on that place and this. That is well; it suits me!"

"My Lord, I am glad you are pleased. I feared——"

"Tut, tut! Gaston; feared—— I am happy."

Gaston Graeme walked the floor, back and forth, then paused, again leaning on the chair, and said: "Lady Hawren was intending to go to Hawren Castle; she said she had promised grandfather to remain here so long as he should live, and now—— My Lord, you will not let her—let them go?"

"Oh, no! She cannot go away up there! She would never like it. No; it will not do. It is much better as it is—that they should remain here. My time will be spent in London mostly, though. They must not go away into that wild region. They would not like it. I shall be compelled to go forthwith to Weirwolf, but will return in ample time for the celebration of Crowingshield's nuptials."

"And I, my Lord, shall be absent for the next two weeks."

"Whither now, Gaston?" asked the Earl, exhibiting some solicitude.

"I am called to Redmond, my Lord, to meet a certain party and to arrange some business matters," he said, with his eyes on the floor.

"Then, Gaston, we will both be absent while the great preparations for the coming fête are in progress."

"I assure you, my Lord, I should not be absent one moment if it were not absolutely necessary; it is hard for me to go, I assure you, for my grandfather—it was his wish—I promised——"

"What?" asked the Earl, gazing earnestly in his face.

"That I should wed with Lady Kathryn."

"Humph! Pray, what does Lady Hawren say to that?"

"She? Oh, she's willing," said Gaston, taking a turn across the floor, his arms folded across his breast.

"What!"

"Yes, oh yes!" keeping his eyes bent upon the floor, "and I thought, as you are now in somewise her protector, she being a member of your family, I would at once get your consent," he said, still walking. Clifton was pale, and sat upright. Remembering what Lady Hawren had told him, he asked:

"But how is it with the young lady, herself?"

"Oh, it is settled with us; we have loved each other from the very first," he replied, with an arrogant and vain-glorious expression.

The Earl gazed steadily at his cousin for a few moments, but could not catch his eye, for Gaston never raised his head, and was busily twirling his moustache. Clifton felt sure it was all false, yet he was troubled. But, dropping back on his pillow, he ignored it all, and, determining to get rid of his cousin, said: "Send Ambrose to me as you go."

"But, my Lord——" said Gaston, awaiting his answer.

"Go! Depart!"

"You have not consented——"

"No; nor will I ever consent to have you even address Lady Kathryn on the subject. I decline—absolutely!"

"Why is this, my Lord; when it was our grandfather's dearest wish, cherished to his last moment?"

"Do not force me to speak, Gaston; you may not like to hear what I would say."

"Say on, my Lord; surely you know no reason why I should not marry our fair cousin!"

Lord Clifton arose and tapped his bell. Gaston stood, with his arms crossed behind him.

"Gaston, you force me to it." There was a fire burning in his bright blue eye as he spoke: "I fear your

life has not been as pure as it should be. You are reckless and wild. Your associations have not been the best. Your life has always been dark and hidden; your ways mysterious. You are secretive in your nature. No one knows where you obtain the money you spend so freely. My grandfather never allowed you one-half of what you have used in the past few years."

"Why, my Lord, you are suspicious. Surely you know that my uncle, Sir Gaston Graeme, has always been most liberal towards me——"

"And a most wicked man, Gaston. You know that he sustains a most unenviable reputation throughout the country, and his influence over you has been anything but desirable. No, Gaston. If you wish to marry, go seek one of your own sort, and do not aspire to one so pure and innocent as my cousin."

Ambrose, his Lordship's attendant, now entered the room, and Lord Graeme, without another word, turned and left the apartment.

On his face there was a sinister expression and a look of determination. From his infancy his grandfather had instilled in him a great respect for the prospective Earl, and though he was wild and wayward he still felt the force of his early training, and felt constrained, while in Clifton's presence, to show him great deference. He knew he had spoken falsely when he said Kathryn loved him, but was determined to win her at all hazards, and bluff the Earl, if possible, with the idea that he and his cousin were already engaged.

"Look to yourself, my Lord," he said to himself, as he went his way, grinding his teeth in rage. "You may not live always to lord it over me! How glorious if I might have Lady Kathryn, the title, the possessions—the annual rent-rolls, all—— Look to your laurels, my Lord; by heaven, you will not be master

of the situation long. Here he has been met with great demonstration, greeted like a king returning to his capital; the bells for joy rung, guns fired, and martial music, awaking the whole country; and a sumptuous banquet prepared; when he is no better than I. But I must curb my temper, for I can not afford to go away now, and leave him here with the treasure in his possession—leave Lady Kathryn to him, and go away. Never! That would suit him well, no doubt, but she shall never be his; no, his life first!”



CHAPTER XIII.

WEDDING BELLS.

“Ring out the merry bells, the bride approaches;
The blush upon her cheek has shamed the blooming
 morning,
For that is dawning palely.”

A GRAND social occasion—a ball, given in honor of the home-coming of the young Earl, in connection with the celebration of the nuptial rites between Mr. Barry Crowningshield, Fleetwood’s first man of business, and Mrs. Emily Edmonds, was now approaching.

Lady Hawren had decided, as there had been no public demonstration on the arrival of the young Earl, that his welcome should be celebrated in connection with the wedding, which had been already appointed for the fifth of October, just three weeks after the Earl’s arrival, giving ample time for all preparations.

Invitations had been sent out to the nobles and gentry for miles around, and all were in anxious anticipation of the pleasing event—the whole country

was agog over the coming fête. Marshals and minstrels were notified and appointed, pages and heralds were put in training.

The large hall under the tower, called the Hall of State, or great court-room, and the State banquetting-room of the old castle were transformed, as if by magic art, into fairy habitations of soft lights and lovely flowers, for the "Count," with a small army of assistants, after putting the garden in perfect order, came in from the conservatory of brilliant exotics to decorate the sumptuous State hall and salon.

On the walls were the finest paintings of historic interest; the genealogical tree, with many heroic achievements and emblems of honor. And here were mantel-boards and casements, rich with quaint carvings and lattice work of the Elizabethan age; consoles and tables of Buhl-work; great columns of alabaster whiteness gleamed in the subdued light of innumerable lamps of exquisite make, suspended from candelabra of polished silver, wreathed with blooming plants.

As the throng of welcomed guests was ushered in, the scene became one of brilliant animation. In this assemblage of beauty were men famous in history, men of science, weather-beaten army officers in gorgeous uniforms and badges, high-born dames with jeweled hair, wearing robes inwrought with gold, young ladies of marvelous beauty in brilliant costumes; gentle knights with numerous decorations, gleaming swords clanking at their heels, and "radiant baldrick o'er his shoulders tied," breathing love's ardent flame. Mellow music rippled forth from the minstrels' gallery at the farther end of the great State Hall.

In the parlors and grand drawing-rooms, soft wax lights and sweet odors from the tropical luxuriance lent a charm indescribable to the scene. The gayest of the gay promenaded up and down the long court-

room, where were soon to begin the country dance, reels, hornpipes, strathspreys and jigs, for the quadrille had not yet come from France, in and out among the tall columns, where many lights flashed and twinkled through masses of swaying flowers. The effect was entrancing.

Presently all were summoned to the lofty chapel, where the spousal rites were to be solemnized by Fleetwood's chaplain, Reverend Mr. Hayston. Lady Hawren, in a white brocade pelisse which fell from her graceful figure in stately folds to the sweeping train, had assisted in receiving the guests, and now, leaning on the arm of Doctor Godkins, a highly favored guest, who was all animation and lively talk, led the way to the arched chapel, followed by the vast throng. The Earl accompanied the Countess of Carlisle, a delicate woman, with tall plumes nodding and bobbing with every movement of her stately head; her magnificent pelisse falling away in front, revealed a rich petticoat of soft mull and white lace.

What a charming bride! How refined and elegant! How grand and proud looked the bridegroom as he graciously received the congratulations of his many friends. Supper was soon announced, when all repaired to the sumptuous banquetting hall, where tables were loaded with richest viands, gleaming silver of quaint and ancient pattern, and lovely floral decorations, corresponding with the magnificent splendor of the surroundings, all *recherché* in every appointment.

Louis marshaled the guests, according to their rank. Many pages were here, in bright array, giving noble attention to the wants of all, while throngs of servants attended. Strains of martial music thrilled the souls of old warriors, who soon grew merry and loud over their bowls of sparkling wine and nut-brown ale.

After a glorious feast the bridal party repaired to the balcony of State, on one side of the great court-

room, which had been draped especially for them with hangings of cloth-of-gold and crimson velvet. Overhead a blazoned banner embroidered with the coat-of-arms of Fleetwood, draped in rippling folds, mingled with the rich hangings festooned around the balustrade.

Here the bride and groom were seated, surrounded by masses of bloom and glossy foliage, where they might view the bewildering scene below, as the happy guests were entering into the old-fashioned country dances. There was Lord Phantomfell, promenading with a dark-eyed lady of incomparable elegance—it is Miss Hamilton. His long lovelock, tied with a soft ribbon, hangs at his ear.

Leaning on the arm of the Earl of Fleetwood was the magnificent Countess of Carlisle—merry creature, known as the match-making countess.

“How is it with you, Louis; have you supped yet?” asked Guy, bursting from the crowded hall and meeting Louis in the doorway of the dining-hall, who, as master of the banqueting tables, had been kept busy till a late hour.

“Not I, Mr. Brignol; too many others have occupied the tables, and have been too deliberate in their speeches and their toasts, while here I’ve stood, gaping and waiting my turn—— But, Guy, why have you not ere this sought out the engaging Miss Hamilton, than whom no mortal is more majestic, to your way of thinking, at least. Is it not so, Guy? Only see her now, promenading with Phantomfell.”

“Yes, Phantomfell, no doubt, has the advantage of me, Louis. Indeed, she is equipped with all the arts that beautify and polish life! Her beauty delights my soul!”

“There’s lightning in those eyes.”

“Aye, I have seen them flash forth ere this. Think you they may not contain depths of love as well, that

might flash and scintillate to the destruction of a mortal soul?"

"There, indeed, are 'Nymphs divine, dangerous to a soul like mine,' beyond a doubt. Only note, nestling amid her dusky locks, a cockade of flaming ribbon, from which rises, in graceful curves, two bird-of-Paradise plumes, remarkable for their brightness of tints, lovely texture and brilliant metallic reflections; a wealth of Spanish lace falls around her superb form. She might readily be taken for a Spanish Doña."

"Behold with what dainty grace she leans upon his arm, to his great delight, no doubt!" observed Guy dryly.

"Aye, Guy, he appears 'smit wi' love'; behold the old-fashioned lovelock about his ear."

He adheres to the old fashion in more ways than one—in more than lovelocks.

"Unfashionable in other respects, hey! Aye, velvet coat, satin-lined, a waistcoat much embroidered—observe his weepers, or pleureuses, clogged gold—lace of stately price, wrought all over with needlework, speckled here and there with 'the sonne, the monne, the starres,' and many other antiquities strange to behold."

"Aye, the deep frills of fine lace at his knees and lace roses on his shoes, after the fashion of the days of Charles II."

"His soft yellowish hair falls in ringlets from the top of his head, in imitation of the wigs worn in the previous century; square-toed shoes, and silk stockings on his long, slender, pipe-stem legs. He carries a walking cane with eyeglass on the head of it, through which he scrutinizes the ladies, feeling in his egotism that he has but to propose to be accepted by the best."

"She carries herself haughtily, and is well equipped with grace and vivacity."

"Aye, back to the old subject—harping on the old string—it is Miss Hamilton who holds in thrall your heart and mind."

"That I cannot help, Louis. I feel like quoting from *The Muses' Elysium*, Nimphall ii. When she is mine, for her

" . . . head Ile have a Tyer
Of netting made of Strawberry wyer,
And in each knot that doth compose
A mesh, shall stick a halfe-blowne Rose
Red, damaske, white, in order set;
About the sides shall run a fret
Of primroses; the Tyer throughout
With Thrift and Daysyes fringed about."

"Only see! Her ears look like rose petals, under her midnight hair. You are good at description, Louis. What call you the style of her bodice? The cut in front—the soft-looking, white, foamy, gauzy—what do you call it?"

"Let's see—point, point—no. Surplice; that's the word, with chemisette of white tucked mull? crepe? Ah, illusion."

"Illusion? Yes!"

"Yet I know not the name of all these delicate fabrics, but 'tis pretty, anyway, and with that great ruff standing about her ears she looks not unlike Elizabeth Christiana, Princess of Brunswic-Bevern."

"Ah, Louis; when saw you the Princess of Brunswic-Bevern?"

"When last we attended court, upon the wall at Hampton Court, I saw her picture—a great painting. I accompanied my Lord to the Palace."

"Louis, you persist in following my Lord to court. You have not, then, despaired of the accolade?"

"Nay, Guy, I trust yet to feel that especial mark of grace, the sword laid upon my shoulders, accom-

panied with the words: 'In the name of God we dub thee knight. Arise, Sir Louis Kearney.' "

"A consummation devoutly to be wished for——
She has the sweetest voice in all the world——"

"Miss Hamilton? Aye; she well knows the value of a beautiful voice."

"Can blazing carbuncle with her compare?"

"Aye, 'she blazes like a comet,' " quotes Louis.

"The smile that flits over her face is like the glimpse of a moonlight rainbow. She's a goddess of beauty!"

"Bacon says beauty is as a summer fruit—easy to corrupt, and cannot last. Guy, 'thou wilt be like a lover presently, and tire the hearers with a book of words.' I must admit she is a heavenly beauty."

"Aye, Louis; you know a beauty when you see one, my friend; your taste is commendable. Your——"

"Ho, now! But this is but empty praise without the pudding, and there's a state of vacuity within that requires to be filled. Hunger and thirst are powerful persuaders. Behold, then, there is a little table furnished bounteously with dainties from the feast; let us to it, 'Where bright goblets sparkle and foam.' Here, Kenneth! Macduff! hither with your wine."

"Ah, how the minstrels play on every side, and how vain are they of their art." Guy and Louis seat them at a table. Near them, at another table, are some pages—Julien, Rorey, Petroneus and others—eating grapes and nuts; while not far off sat the "Count," a bottle of wine at his elbow, of which he was making fine use. Quite near them, on the other hand, were the two clergymen, still lingering over their winecups—Mr. Hayston, chaplain of Fleetwood, and the visiting clergyman of the neighboring church. The visiting clergyman was saying:

"We, as envoys between heaven and earth, my

brother, should show, by precept and example, how we scorn all earthly vanities."

"Yea, my brother, yea; all its vainglory and pomp—allow me to refill your glass."

"Ah! aye, aye. A few drops, it is said, after midnight hour, cannot harm even the humble votaries of—ah—the—ah—"

"The reverend gentlemen linger long at the board, and are, I perceive, a little flushed with wine," observed Guy.

"Aye, their dignity consists much, methinks, in their long and reverend beard. Hasten there, Macduff!—Kenneth! Oh! here they are!"

"Oh that life was one continual banquet, enjoyment of the passing its only demand!" quoted Louis.

Sitting near the long colonnade, they could see couples promenading back and forth, in gay converse.

"My Lord looks grand to-night. Only see, he has relieved Miss Hamilton of Lord Phantomfell's company, which, I trow, she was not relishing over much, to say the least; and now they promenade. How proudly she leans upon his Lordship's arm!"

"And gifted, aye, with beauty's countless charms, while Cupids lie in ambush amid her dusky hair."

"Aye, but my Lord's heart is not resting on her beauties. For him all her countless charms, ambushed Cupids and all else are of no effect."

"How, then, Louis?"

"He loves his pretty cousin, whom he so fortunately picked up on the roadside on the day he first journeyed hither."

"I blame him not for that, indeed," said Guy.

"And it were not so, I'd set in and win her myself. I'd soon give my Lord Graeme something to study about, and leave him to 'chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.' He's raving crazy about her. She cares not a fig for him, neither."

"Yet he has been hovering over her all evening; hanging in ecstasy on her every word and look."

"'Like some passive broken lump of salt,
Dropped in by chance to a bowl 'of onemel,
To spoil the drink a little,'

quoted Louis, and continued:

"An' I were in my Lord's place, you should see
that no Jack-Guardant could take from me my
heart's delight."

"Only see now, there they go! How lovely she is, in her rich robes."

"True, as I live!" cried Louis, in surprise. "I had not expected this. She vowed to me, only last evening, she's never more listen to his ravings."

"Away they go to the garden. My Lord observes them, too. See how ill at ease he is," said Guy.

"An' had I cause, like my Lord, I'd seek him there and oppose him fully."

"Louis, methinks you are too officious in her behalf, who scorns your services."

"Scorns my services, indeed! She's asked my help—and that's true!"

"When a man is past his sense,
There's no way to reduce him thence,"

quotes Guy.

"But twinging him by ears or nose,
Or laying on of heavy blows,"

continued Louis.

"And that is the part I should like most."

"He is in a raging calenture of love, like a distracted passenger he stands, and beholds in seas imag-

inary land, cool groves and flowery meads; and while he thinks he walks, plunges in and wonders why he sinks."

"There!" exclaimed Louis. "My Lord has relinquished Miss Annie to the tender mercies of Lord Phantomfell again, much to her dislike, and is following. I trust he will wallop Gaston well, as he richly deserves. But, Guy, why sit you here idle, worshipping the proud beauty at so great a distance, when you might go to her relief, and be gratefully welcomed; or is it all a chimera of the brain, your loving this sweet Annie?"

"Louis, my timidity forbids. You, if you fear not to arouse Phantomfell's dislike, might go and relieve the situation; then by and by you could leave her to me——"

"Hout, hout! Hand your claver, ye daft auld carline," cried Sandy, nearby, gesticulating wildly, as he prevented an old hag-like gypsy from passing into the ballroom.

"Ho, there, Sandy! Why stand you here 'flyting wi' the auld cutty,' as you would say," cried Louis. "Give her a well-filled stoup and bicker and send her off."

"Hit's thae megglesome auld carline, thae daft auld fule, wanting to gang i' thae ha' wi' thae great folks. Thae bablin auld hypercrith, to claim she can foretell thae future events. Hout, hout, thou whillywam auld fule. Ye no can gang amang thae gentle folks, I tell ye. Get out i' thae grounds wi' your clashes and clevers; get out, I say, and gie thae fortunes o' thae daffing deil's buckies, and thae taupie gill-flirts o' queans, skirling i' thae kailyard."

"Ho, there, Sandy, curb thy loquacity. Put the old gaberlunzie outside and send Macduff and Kenneth hither. We are in need of more wine and a brace of fowls. Here, Kenneth! Macduff! attend."

Sandy hustled the old gypsy into the courtyard, and while Macduff and Kenneth were in attendance on the young men he returned.

"So, Sandy, you would not admit the old hag among the ladies and young men, to settle their love affairs for them," said Louis, as he tore into the juicy breast of a fresh-broiled heath-cock.

"Nae, nae, Master Kearney! I's held me place here as footman mony a year, and sould I admit thae dafted auld carline I hae nae dout the Laird would turn me out in nae time at a'. Nae, nae, Master Kearney; I's had me uppes and doons i' thae world, and mair doons than uppes, too."

"Very well for you, Sandy; a faithful old footman you have been, truly; and, as Mr. Brignol and I are just leaving, come and make out for yourself a good supper." So saying, Louis and Guy rose from the table, leaving Sandy in full charge.

Amid all this splendor and lovely surroundings, Kathryn was most unhappy. She was superb in her evening toilette of snow-white tulle. There were pearls and some late white garden flowers amid the profusion of her splendid hair. She stood at one end of the crowded salon, gracefully leaning on a statue, not much whiter than her own face, hidden by trailing vines and choice exotics. Away in a long colonnade she could see the Earl with Annie, promenading back and forth. Annie seemed radiant with happiness, and Kathryn supposed the Earl was happy. She had just escaped the vigilance of Lord Graeme, who had been hanging about her all evening as one exercising a prerogative. She could turn no way but he was by her side. Now she thought she had eluded him, for a time, at least, and was just congratulating herself on her finesse in getting him off with a very pretty blond. She sat down with Hortense and Marie,

who were here among the flowers, admiring the "fair ladies and brave men." She watched the Earl and Annie, and thought bitterly:

"Why cannot I promenade with him and be so free and happy as Annie appears to be? No! With him I still would be unhappy. I am miserable out of his presence, yet still more so by his side." She felt her breath leaving her; her heart was thumping wildly as she thought of her promise. She heard a well-known voice at her side, a voice that had grown most hateful to her.

"Why, Lady Kathryn; my fair cousin! How did I ever lose sight of you? How did you escape me, and why have you hidden your sweet self here among the flowers with your maidens? Come, my lady, let us go out into the glorious moonlight and stroll among the bowers."

She shrank back, not wishing to accompany him, but at the same time felt she needed the cool air to revive her drooping spirits. She hesitated, but he put forth his hand, assisted her to rise, and, placing her hand on his arm, led her along down the long salon. She had whispered Marie and Hortense to follow.

Passing not far from where the Earl and Annie were at this moment turning at the farther end of the colonnade to retrace their steps, the Earl saw them pass into the corridor leading to a little balcony reaching out over the garden. He could not know with what reluctance she had accompanied Lord Graeme. She looked happy, so far as he could see. A wretched pang of jealousy stung his quivering heart.

He had noted Gaston's close attendance; how could he know that she had not encouraged him. He, himself, had kept aloof, not wishing to come in contact with Gaston.

Lord Graeme led her onto the little balcony. Here she wished to stop, but, "no," he said. "It is delight-

ful in the moon-lit gardens. We will go on out in the fresh air." He led her down a little flight of steps. On their way down the lovely garden path they passed many other couples walking, and could hear the murmur of voices all about them as they paused beside a sparkling fountain, and stood side by side under a beautiful yulan tree, transplanted here from its mother country.

The maids following, now busied themselves among the flowers. Soft music came to them, wafted on the balmy air of night; a rich odor from the flowers pervaded the atmosphere; the moonlight was glorious—all spoke of love.

Lord Graeme was enraptured, but Kathryn was distressed.

"Oh, sweet cousin, is not this Paradise? I have so longed, since my return, to have the pleasure of a long talk with you, but have not been able—you have evaded me, it seems. My dearest, now you will give me the long-looked-for promise—the sweet assurance you will be mine!"

"Gaston, Lord Graeme, I endure your company, but it is not agreeable to me. I——"

"Tell me not so, darling. You must listen to me! Hear my words of love."

"Oh, take me back, Gaston. I must go back to my mother. She would not like to have me here."

"No, no, darling; stay. You know how madly I love you. My heart is breaking for you, dearest of all! This night I must have your promise—it was our grandfather's wish. You must; you shall be mine!"

"No, no. I have told you repeatedly that I cannot love you. Let us go back; oh, take me back!"

"I cannot! I will not!" he cried, passionately. "You are mine! You shall be my bride, dearest of all! Tell me that you will be mine!"

"Never, never!" She started to fly. He caught her hand and, throwing his arm around her waist, held her fast. Terrified beyond measure, she uttered a little shriek.

"By heaven you shall stay and listen to me," he cried, in a hoarse voice.

"No, no! I will not! I hate you! Marie! Marie!" she cried, wildly.

After Lord Graeme and Kathryn had passed from the colonnade down the corridor, the Earl, observing the two maids following, tried to content himself to remain inside, but could not do so. Leaving Annie with Lord Phantomfell, he hastened down the corridor, where he walked to and fro a little; then, noticing his guests all seemed to be enjoying themselves, he thought to withdraw himself from them for a short time. He felt he could not leave Kathryn alone with Gaston, who, he thought, appeared to be a little flushed with wine.

What excuse could he make for following them up? It was a little cool outside, in the open air. He snatched a lovely Bengal from a rack, 'twas hers, he knew. He had seen her wear it. Yes, he would take her shawl. She would need it over her thin dress—the dew falling, too. Passing out, he stood awhile under the shadow of the balcony, hesitating, while a fretting jealousy worked within.

Now his attentive ear caught a little shriek. He started and ran rapidly down the garden walk. Pausing to listen, he heard a passionate voice saying:

"By heaven, you shall stay and listen to me!" Then, "No, no! I will not!" Momentarily he stood, as one petrified, then fled in the direction of the voices.

Kathryn, terrified beyond measure, and struggling violently, had released herself from Gaston's clasp, and, running wildly down the long walk leading back to the balcony, collided with the Earl, whom she

met running toward her, and fell, almost fainting, into his arms.

"Cousin! Cousin!" he cried. "What has happened? What has frightened you so?" Weak and trembling, she reposed upon his bosom, just one blissful moment, sobbing convulsively, his heart throbbing wildly against her own.

"Dear cousin, pray, what has happened?" Shuddering now, she drew away from his clasp.

"You are cold, Lady Kathryn. I have brought your shawl—allow me," and he gently placed it about her shoulders.

"Oh, my Lord! Thank you," she said, excitedly.

Taking her hand, he drew it within his arm and led her to the balcony. Both looked back, but saw nothing of Gaston.

"Shall we sit here, in the shadow of the balcony, or walk in the garden while you tell me what so frightened you?"

"Here in the shadow, my Lord, if you please."

He placed her on a rustic seat beneath the balcony, and sat beside her; then said:

"Pray tell me, cousin, what frightened you; were you with Gaston; and is not he your accepted lover?"

"Oh, no, no, my Lord! Indeed, he is not! My aversion for him is too great." With what rapture he hung upon her words.

"Your aversion! And do you not love him, my Lady?"

"Love him? No, no; oh, my Lord, no! How could you think so? I have never given him cause to think it."

"My dear cousin, how has he dared to offend you?"

"Oh, my Lord, he is your cousin. I would not for the world that, on my account, he should be brought into disfavor with you."

"We were never very good friends, Lady Kathryn, I assure you, and he is not worthy of your friendship; neither your least regard. I would not say this, but, occupying the position that I do, I feel it my duty to act as your protector and guard your interests. Dear cousin, he is not a fit companion for you. I am sorry to say this of my own cousin."

"Oh, my Lord! How I do thank you for your kind care and protection. How, oh how, could you think I love him, my Lord?"

"He, himself, told me that he was your accepted suitor."

"My Lord, how could he? He has presumed too far. He has persecuted me with his attentions since I came to this place. I admit, I at first enjoyed his company somewhat, but never, never could I think of loving him, and I have plainly told him so," she said, quivering with excitement.

"He shall not persecute you longer, my dear cousin, with his unwelcome attentions," rejoined the Earl.

"Oh, do not offend him; pray do not have trouble with him on my account, my dear cousin—my Lord."

"Cousin, are you quite sure you have not encouraged him? May you not at some time have given him reason to hope that he might one day claim your hand?"

"Oh, my Lord, I assure you I have never thought of marrying him. I admit I did, for a time, enjoy his company—until he began to make love to me on all occasions. I knew I did not love him. I did not then know what love was," she said, thoughtlessly.

"Then, you did not know then?"—how he caught on the word. How his heart bounded with hope and happiness. "Have you since learned to love—him?"

"Him? Oh, no, no! I have said I do not love him; nor can I ever love him." Her bosom heaved with emotion, her eyes flashed with indignation at

the remembrance of Gaston trying to force her to remain and listen to his love; and she said, as she glanced up into the Earl's face:

"My Lord, I did not wish to go into the garden with him, but he urged, and I consented. Then, my Lord, he wanted me to listen to him, and I would not. He became angry and swore that I should, and when I started to leave him he seized and held me. I succeeded in releasing myself from his grasp and fled, my Lord, and did not see you coming up the path. You must have thought me rude, indeed, to run against you as I did."

Her face crimsoned at the thought of lingering on his bosom. "I ask your Lordship's pardon," she said.

"Indeed, 'twas I who ran against you! I saw you leave the hall with him, cousin, and, fearing some trouble, followed. I cannot say why, unless it was I noticed he was flushed with wine. I heard you scream, and was running to your assistance, and ran against you, and must ask your pardon. Will you pardon me?"

"Oh, yes, sir; but you will not mention it—distress my mother by telling her of it?"

"What—that I met you fleeting and caught you in my arms? Would that distress her, think you?" he asked sweetly.

She glanced up, and met his eyes, filled with a world of love.

"Oh, no," she said, blushing deeply, "but—but—my Lord, that I went with Gaston, and he was so rude, and—and I fled from him in such an inelegant manner, my Lord. She has ever opposed my going with him."

"I promise you, my Lady, on condition that you never accompany him anywhere again."

"Indeed, my Lord, I can never speak to him again; and do promise you. I shall never more go in his

company," she said, looking straight into his honest, love-lit eyes. The moonlight had sought them out by driving back the shadow. Jewels trembled on her bosom, the color rose in her cheeks, and she said:

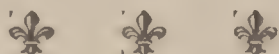
"My Lord, should not we now return to the hall?"

He assisted her to rise, and, placing her hand upon his arm, they ascended the short flight of steps leading to the balcony, and as they walked down the long corridor she appeared nervous and trembled.

"You are not yet composed. Should you not have rested awhile longer?"

"I thank you, my Lord; I shall be sufficiently composed, I trust—but, my Lord, you will have no words with Gaston—you will not involve yourself in trouble with him on my account?"

"Dear cousin, have no fear on that score, but he must be more careful of his conduct in the future. He shall not annoy you, my sweet cousin, with his presence. Be assured, I will be ever near to protect you." and to reassure her he took her hand and gave it a gentle pressure, then led her to a seat beside the Countess of Carlisle, with whom she entered into a pleasant conversation; while he returned to the entertainment of his guests.



CHAPTER XIV.

A MEETING IN THE ORCHARD.

"The silent orchard aisles are sweet
With smell of ripening fruit;
Through the sere grass, in thy retreat,
Flutter at coming feet
The robins, strange and mute.

"There is no wind to stir the leaves,
The harsh leaves overhead;

Only the querulous cricket grieves,
And shrilling locust weaves
A song of summer dead."

MID all the glory of an autumnal sunset, at "The closing hour of light," as the sun was bidding farewell to the flowers and dipping behind the "fire-edged mountains," Kathryn sat on a rustic seat in a remote corner of the great orchard, beneath a fine old apple tree, which was heavily laden with its ruddy fruit. Autumn had set in, with frost, vivid foliage, "golden mists and mellow fruits," tree and vine bending under its load. Her book lay beside her on the seat, while she sat in an ecstasy Elysian—dreaming dreams, enwrapped in joyous visions.

One week had passed away since the great fête at Fleetwood. Mr. Crowningshield and his bride had bidden farewell to their friends and departed for Liverpool, which was to be their future home. Since, the time had been spent pleasantly enough in the castle. True, Kathryn had been intent on her studies, yet there was time enough for gay rides, and rambles, hunting and nutting. On Sabbath they had attended divine service at the little white church on the hill near by.

The Earl, with Guy and Louis, had been occupied, to and fro, to Carlisle and back, arranging business matters relating to the place. Guy had been installed in his office, as family solicitor and secretary. Gaston, to the unspeakable delight of all, had disappeared on the night of the wedding, and nothing more had been seen of him. It was supposed he had gone to his own possessions in Westmoreland.

Kathryn was a great student. The study being a little warm this evening, she had betaken herself to the orchard, and sat under the great tree, and had studied until the sun began to sink behind fiery clouds. Then, falling into a brown study, she sat, with hands

clasped in her lap. Her dress was "of a most noble color—a subdued and goodly crimson," and most becomingly made.

Hearing a footstep on the grass, she turned, and was startled near out of her life to see Gaston approach, wearing a slouched hat, pulled low over his resolute brow.

She would have fled, but he was so very near; besides, she felt she had not power to move.

"My good wishes to you, fair cousin; how happily we meet! I know no reason why we should not dwell together in harmony." His voice was soft and purring. Kathryn rose, and stood with great dignity and proud disdain, her cheeks aglow with scorn.

"Dear cousin, let this gentle eve change all our quarrels and dislikes into love."

"What fate can have brought you hither?"

"Sweet one, I would be felicitate in thy love."

"I counsel you to leave, and never return to this place," she said, with flashing eyes.

"I doubt not some would be quit of me, but you, my cousin," he said, imploringly; "you would not have me leave? To leave you would be to me distraction, frenzy. Forbid who will, none shall withhold from me the woman that I love."

"Your sensibilities seem rather to be those of wounded pride than love," she said.

"Say you so, my cousin? My passion amounts to idolatry. Nay, you have enfettered my soul—all my waking dreams are tinged with thoughts of your bright eyes. You have wrought about me a silken net, in which I find myself inextricably entangled. You have beguiled my fancy, thou fickle heart! Unconstant goddess! By a look, a smile—by your encouraging words—I have been led, basking in the sunbeam of your presence. You have awakened in my breast a passion that will never be quenched—will

never be lulled to rest. Oh, for the sweet simplicity of days gone by!"

"You waste your breath in vain. Pray, sir, leave me!"

"No! Love's labor shall not be lost by the entrance of another more highly favored! Do you think I will leave you to another, and, like a mateless turtle-dove, go mourning all my life? Never! You are mine! By the eternal, you are mine, and shall never become the bride of another! I will die ere it shall be so. No, Lady Kathryn," he said, more tenderly, attempting to take her hand, which she haughtily drew away, shrinking from his touch; "I would rather die than to attempt life's darkening voyage without you, dearest of all! Can I wrestle with my affections? My yearning soul will never rest without you." He attempted to grasp her, but, with a shriek, she drew back, almost fainting from fear, and leaned against the body of the great tree for support. "No ill requital can efface my love. In thus pleading for your love, I feel I deserve other reward than this. Will you not relent? Or, by the Almighty Father of the gods, my love will revert to anger! You are mine, and no other's!" He was reaching out to grasp her, when a strong hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a deep voice rang in his ear:

"How dare you, Gaston! Gaston!" Then, seeing that Lady Kathryn was swooning, the Earl of Fleetwood sprang forward and supported her in his arms. Continuing, he said to Gaston:

"Gaston, why are you here? What would you? Your conduct is not agreeable to courtly usage."

"I am responsible for my conduct, my Lord; nor thank I you for your interference."

"Would you enforce upon a lady the effusion of your love? Shall I sit supinely by and allow you to offend my cousin; to intrude upon her your atten-

tions, your obnoxious presence? Your insolence, Gaston, is intolerable. You have offended our cousin beyond reparation by your pertinacity."

"No doubt, my Lord, viewed from your vantage-ground."

"I wish not to be at variance with you, Gaston, but——"

"Lord Clifton, why should you or any other dare to meddle with my affairs," interrupted Gaston, with fiery eyes and angry brow.

"Under existing circumstances I am her natural guardian. I cannot be unmindful of the ties of consanguinity existing between us, and ask you to resign forever all pretensions to her hand."

"What right have you, my Lord, or any other living man, to dictate terms to me?"

"You should not take it ill, Gaston, that I advise you thus. Her mother has refused you permission to address her; you have already much offended her by your effort to force your attentions upon her. Cannot you leave her in peace, or shall I be obliged to use force to remove from her presence one who is so unwelcome to her? I tell you plainly, I will not have her persecuted by your attentions!" The mild Clifton was awakened to anger. His cheeks kindled into flame, his brow grew dark.

"I fear not you, nor yours, my Lord Clifton. By the eternal gods, I will not give her up! I would venture purgatory for her love, and will yet win it, doubt you not! It seems that you can stand and sustain her in your arms, while I dare not touch her," returned Gaston, with a scowl.

"I am her protector, and will shield her from you just as long as she requests me to do so, Gaston." And, after a pause, he continued: "It was your calumnious misstatements set my grandfather against me. You cannot refute the accusation."

Gaston, ignoring this, said:

"And so, my Lord, I am to go away in bitterness of soul, while you lord it here in bliss! I will leave you, my Lord, with your protégée, but look to yourself. You'll rue this insult and interference in my affairs!" He looked wistfully upon Kathryn's white face, her head resting gracefully on Clifton's shoulder; then, turning away, he muttered under his breath: "She shall be mine! I swear it! I will not be disappointed." And, drawing his hat over his brow, he walked hastily off toward a postern gate.

The Earl tenderly placed Kathryn on the garden seat, as he heard the hoofs of Gaston's horse clattering over the turf—the seat from which she had so hastily risen—and knelt beside her, gently chafing her hands and her face. Very soon she sighed deeply and opened her eyes, and once more looked up into the liquid depths of his soft blue ones. With a sigh and a shudder, she closed them again, while he regarded her with a depth of longing love. She murmured:

"Once again have you saved me from him. You are my preserver! My protector! I shall never forget your great kindness. My Lord, assist me to rise; I must go in. It is now dusky twilight; my mother will be searching for me." As she spoke, he assisted her to her feet, and, drawing her hand in his arm, led her gently along through the purple hazy twilight of the October evening, up a garden walk by way of the small, or rear, courtyard, up the steps leading to the long colonnade, on the east end of which was the ladies' drawing-room, or Aunt Margaret's boudoir, whence floated a sad, sweet strain, accompanied by the soft notes from a lute. The drapery was drawn aside, and lights flashed from the wide-open door and windows, displaying a table spread for tea. Upon a richly upholstered sofa sat Annie and Flora, and while

the dark-eyed Annie breathed a melancholy ditty, the fingers of the fairy-like Flora flew from chord to chord, the faint, sweet symphony from the lute following the voice's melody; the cadences rose and fell rich upon the ear, filling the room with sweetest harmony.

"Oh, my Lord," exclaimed Lady Hawren, hearing his step and catching a glimpse of him, "we were waiting for you to come in and have tea with us—— Why, darling," she cried, on seeing Kathryn in his company, "where have you been? I have just sent Marie up to your room to fetch you to tea, supposing you were there, and had possibly fallen asleep."

"No, mother, I was in the orchard a little while."

"Where I found her, dear aunt, and have brought her to you," said the Earl. "She must not go out again so far alone."



CHAPTER XV.

A HORSEBACK RIDE.

NEXT morning, at breakfast, the Earl turned to Kathryn, who, at his right, sat chatting with Flora, and said:

"My cousin, would you like a canter over the hills this fine morning?"

"Oh, my Lord," she cried, with glowing cheeks and tremulous voice, "if mother only would permit me."

"Will you be ready, then, an hour after breakfast? I will secure her permission."

"I believe, my Lord, that you exert a charm influence over my mother; somehow she always yields to your wishes," she said, with a bow of acquiescence

and a bewitching smile, as their eyes met. He bowed and smilingly said:

"Lady Hawren and I are good friends." But now Kathryn's heart stood still, and a chill passed over her frame, as she thought of all her grandfather had said to her.

At the end of the hour the Earl stood in the front entrance, wearing a handsome riding cloak over a lace-trimmed jerkin, with a buff girdle, which held a small sword, worn more for ornament than for use. Soon he heard the heels of her boots, as she came tripping down the broad stairway in a dark habit, and wearing a new hat, heavily trimmed with black plumes, which, drooping over each side, curved under the brim and fell around her face, the beauty of her peach-pink complexion being enhanced by the contrast. He approached the foot of the staircase and, with a courtly bow, extended his hands to assist her down the steps, intently regarding her face, she was so lovely.

Thinking he regarded her new hat, she asked:

"Do you like my hat, my Lord?"

"It reminds me of the Att Crown of Osiris," he observed.

"Osiris? Was he not one of the gods, my Lord?"

"An Egyptian deity, my Lady," he said.

"I do not know that his crown was admirable, so still do not know whether you admire my new hat," she said, her face growing roseate under his prolonged look of admiration.

"Indeed I do. It is beautiful! How lovingly do the plumes seem to cluster about your face."

"My Lord, I do not believe that plumes can cluster 'lovingly,' do you?"

"At least, my dear cousin, they may appear to do so, will you not admit?"

"Possibly, my Lord."

He led her down the hall, and as they went he examined her wrist, which had been so cruelly bruised in her fall, and asked, solicitously:

"Is it sufficiently well, do you think? Shall you be able to guide your palfrey?"

"Oh, indeed it is, my Lord. Besides, it is my whip hand; I hold the reins in my left always."

"Ah, that is true," he said, as Kibbie led up to the long stone steps a snow-white palfrey, the saddle decorated with an embroidered sumpter cloth reaching the ground. Andy stood by, holding his Lordship's charger, a fiery black. Lord Clifton placed her in the saddle; then mounting his steed, they set off on a lovely three-mile ride to the village. On account of being disabled in her arm, she had not ridden with him before. How she enjoyed this ride! How miserable she felt at times, yet again how her heart bounded with happiness as they dashed along, and he so gallantly praised her horsemanship. She sat her horse well, and he admired her greatly.

They dashed on through the bracing air to the village, then turned their course, and back again toward home. When almost home, they started on a little run down the long lane to the park gate. And, as they were passing a clump of copse-wood just inside the wall, there was a report from a gun; a ball whizzed past, just missing the Earl's shoulder. He reined up his horse and, to Kathryn's great distress and anxiety, dashed back to the thicket to discover, if possible, who had been so careless as to fire toward them. But, the great stone wall intervening, he could see no one.

Hastening back to Kathryn, he found her greatly excited.

"Dear cousin, perhaps I should not have left you—pardon me—but I was anxious to discover who had so thoughtlessly fired his piece toward us. Could I

have found him, I should have reprimanded him roundly, whoever it was; I fear you have been much frightened," he said, for he observed her face was blanched with terror.

"Oh, my Lord! He—— Someone has attempted your life. I felt sure you would be slain while there looking for him. Oh——!"

"Do not you feel distressed, my cousin; 'twas perhaps some of our men hunting birds, who accidentally fired toward us—someone bird-hunting among the trees," he said, reassuringly.

But Kathryn did not believe so. She felt it was someone seeking his life, and was in a perfect tremor.

Now, inside the park gate, as they rode slowly along, Kathryn said:

"My Lord, someone has attempted your life," her voice trembling.

"Think you so, my cousin? I trust you will not believe it. Do not allow such a thought to disturb you."

"My Lord, if you believed it, and had found the man who fired the shot at you, would you have shot him?"

"Shoot him? Oh, no, my Lady. Was it that that frightened you so? No, no! Bloodshed is so abhorrent to me that I would, I think, under no consideration, take the life of a human being. It is not in my nature to wish to kill. And scarcely to save my own life would I take the life of one of God's creatures. I am no coward, I think, yet have an abhorrence to the shedding of blood."

Closely she scanned his clear, open countenance, and could discern nothing there but purity and love. She then asked:

"My Lord, suppose you saw one attempt to injure me, or take my life; would not you shoot him?"

"Cousin, I am an exceptionally fine marksman, and

would, no doubt, shoot a man who would offer you injury; but would not take his life. I would try to disable him, but could not kill, unless I were compelled to do so. If I could not save your very precious life otherwise, I might shoot to kill." And he beamed into her eyes a look of deepest love.

There was an irresistible charm in his face and manner, Kathryn thought, and a perfect heaven in his eyes. Her face was now beautifully suffused with a roseate hue, and as he assisted her to alight, he asked:

"Have you enjoyed your ride, my Lady?"

"Oh, so much, my Lord! I thank you for giving me so great a pleasure. This is the first ride I have had since the—that eventful day——"

"Of our first meeting? I should like to take you out on to-morrow—and every day, but must leave," he sighed.

"Oh, my Lord; are you going away?"

"Lady Kathryn, I assure you nothing would please me more than to remain here, but my affairs call me back to Weirwolf. When I was called hither, on hearing of my dear grandfather's death, my affairs were left unsettled, and the last time I was there I hastened back in order to attend Mr. Crowning-shield's wedding, which I would not have missed for any consideration."

At the foot of the stairway they paused. He felt he could not leave her yet; then he said: "Allow me," and, taking her hand, led her up the broad stairway and on, to the door of her room, where they again paused. He still held her hand, and said:

"I expect to return one week before Hallowe'en and remain for some time after. May we not have some pleasant rides during that time?"

"Oh, yes, sir; and I assure you I shall look forward to the time with pleasurable anticipation."

"Will you promise me that you will not go out

alone, or attended only by Kibbie, any distance? It is not safe, I think."

She looked up into his love-lit eyes, and said:

"I do promise, my Lord."

"Thank you, cousin," he said; then released her hand, after giving it a gentle pressure, and went to his own apartments, to dress for luncheon.

Entering her room, Kathryn found no one in attendance. She passed on to her bedroom, and there she sank upon her bed, all in a heap, in habit and hat. Then she moaned piteously:

"Oh, it must not be! I am so wicked! Why do I yield to my feelings? I must not love him! Oh, I have been so happy, and now am so miserable. He loves me—I know he loves me, though he has never said it! Oh, the agony—when I know I must not love him. I must not!"

She rose and walked the floor, and with upturned face and clasped hands repeated the following lines of an ancient Greek epigram from the Anthology:

"'Tis love that murmurs in my breast,
And makes me shed the secret tear;
Nor day nor night my soul hath rest,
For night and day his voice I hear.
A wound within my heart I find,
And, oh! 'tis plain where love hath been;
For still he leaves a wound behind,
Such as within my heart is seen.
Oh! bird of love, with song so dear,
Make not my soul the nest of pain;
But let the wing which brought thee here
In pity waft thee hence again!"

For awhile she stood motionless, with flaming cheeks, coral lips and sparkling eyes. Then, turning, with nervous hand she struck her call-bell three times rapidly, then began to lay off her things.

Marie soon made her appearance.

"Marie, is it not near time for luncheon?"

"Ess, Miladi."

"Lay out something for me to put on, while I bathe my face, Marie."

She bathed her face in sweet marjoram water, then asked:

"Marie, is not my face very much flushed?"

"Oh, ess, Miladi; eet ees vair mudge flushed. What would Miladi lige?"

"Get me something of soft light color, Marie."

"Zee lilac silk, Miladi?" asked Marie, searching among the lovely costumes in the wardrobe.

"Oh, yes, yes; anything, dear. I am so nervous—only do hurry. Get my hair arranged—let it hang in curls, Marie, and just tie it back with a ribbon."

When she was ready to go down she threw her arms around Marie, who was a very sweet girl, saying:

"Marie, go down with me to the door; then you can run back and put away the things."

"Ess, Miladi." Kathryn was nervous. She feared the Earl would meet her at the foot of the stairs and lead her in, and she had resolved to repell him and possess herself with more reserve. But he was not there. All the rest of the family had gathered in the drawing-room, and were awaiting his presence. Louis rose as Kathryn entered, and offered her a seat, and sat down beside her. Complimenting her on her rosy complexion, he said:

"My Lady, should you take many more such rides as the one you had to-day, we'd have no further need for the services of Doctor Godkins on your account."

Meanwhile the Earl had hastened to his apartments, his heart swelling with righteous pride and happiness. In his pleasant parlor he found Ambrose packing away some clothing.

"Ambrose, are you getting all ready for our departure?"

"Aye, my Lord, hevrything will be ready, Hi promise you, sir."

"Where is Jean?"

"Your Lordship will find 'im in your dressing-room, hawaiting your Lordship's pleasure."

"Very well, Ambrose. We will not be absent long this time, but try and be ready for an early start."

Entering his dressing-room, the Earl threw off his light riding cloak, saying:

"Come, Jean; assist me to get ready for luncheon."

"What habiliments will Milord wear to-day?" asked the French valet.

"Gray, Jean—gray doublet, black hose and low shoes," he responded, absently, thinking only of Kathryn—the delightful ride they had enjoyed, and the confiding look in her soft brown eyes as she had raised them to his, saying: "I do promise." As Jean approached with a suit of gray, he heard the Earl speak distinctly, as he sat gazing into space, and say: "Oh, the sweet, soft brown——"

"Eh, bien!" exclaimed Jean; and, turning around he replaced the gray suit and, selecting one of soft brown wool, returned.

The Earl, still in a brown study, thinking of her loveliness and his love for her, cried out, "Unspeakable!" Then, in the same breath, remembering Gaston's misconduct, continued: "The unconscionable villain!"

Poor, Jean, thinking he had offended his master, cried:

Mille pardons, Milord! Did you not say the brown one?"

"Oh, Jean, boy, what are you about?" said the Earl, starting up.

"I will wear my black French velvet—yes, the black, with white laces—did I not say the black? I will be in company with the ladies for the remainder

of the day," said his Lordship, again lapsing into his brown study.

Ciel! Pardon, Milord!" Jean returned to the wardrobe and, with his head all smothered among the clothing, gave vent to his feelings: "Zounds, donc; but Milord, he is variable to-day! How shall I please him then? *Ciel! Il agit en furieux!*" Taking up a suit of finest French velvet, with deep white laces, he brought them forth and, in self-defence, said:

"Milord, you at first said you would have the gray," but the Earl sat as one in a dream. He had now decided that Kathryn loved him. Beyond a doubt, she returned his love, and said: "It is true! It is true!"

"Then, my Lord, it is the gray you wish?"

"There can be no doubt about it," he cried absently, as he rose and threw off his doublet. Rousing himself, he called:

"Jean! Jean! Here, draw off my riding boots."

Jean had started to fetch the gray.

"Where go you now with my clothes, boy? What now, Jean?"

"For the gray, Milord."

"Gray? No, Jean. Here, the black velvet—that will do."

As Jean drew off his master's riding boots he said:

"*Ciel*, my master, but you will look grand in this black velvet and lace!"

"How is it, now, Jean?" he asked, as his toilet was about completed.

"*Bien!* Your Lordship vill be un homme gallant! Permettez, Milord!" he then said, approaching with a belt and beautiful sword.

"*Ess, ess*, Milord. *Merci*, but you vill luke extraordinary this evening," said Jean, admiringly, standing aside and surveying his Lordship with approval.

"Very well, then, Jean; I wish to feel that I am properly dressed," said the Earl, as he left the room.

Jean watched his master as he turned down the long corridor with a sprightly, joyous step, and murmured:

"Vraiment, Milord, il est charmant!"

On his way to the drawing-room, the Earl thought:

"I must speak to Lady Hawren, and obtain her permission to declare my love *now*. My ardent spirit will not brook delay—is impatient of all restraint."

Entering the drawing-room, he bowed to the ladies. By this time Kathryn's face had assumed a delicate peach-pink, aided by the glow from the shade of her lilac gown. Louis rose to give place to him, but His Lordship motioned him back, and, approaching Lady Hawren, who stood near the center of the room, he said:

"Dear Lady Hawren, have I kept you waiting? I ask your pardon."

"No, my Lord, only for a moment," she returned, gently placing her hand upon his arm. He led her to the cozy little parlor, where luncheon was served.

But early next morning he started for Weirwolf, mounted on horseback, with about twenty followers, to be gone something like two weeks.

The third day after his departure, being Sunday, the ladies, with Guy, attended the kirk in the village. On their return, they were greatly surprised to find that Lord Graeme had arrived during their absence, with a numerous following.

He was affable and gracious toward all, and regretted much that business engagements had kept him so long away from their pleasant society. Kathryn gave him no recognition, and, with much dignity, avoided him, scarcely leaving her room during his stay, which he appeared not to observe, but attempted to render himself most agreeable to all the others, and remained until about time for the Earl's return.

After vainly seeking an opportunity for a conversation with Kathryn, who never met him save at table

at meal time; who met his every offer of friendship with the greatest disdain and *hauteur*, having daily sent her a billet-doux, praying her forgiveness, and asking for a *tête-à-tête*, which she returned to him untouched, he left, disconsolate and dejected, knowing that he dare not meet the Earl.



CHAPTER XVI.

HALLOWE'EN.

"Then came the autumn, all in yellow clad,
 As tho he joyed in his plenteous store,
 Laden with fruits that made him laugh, full glad
 That he had banisht hunger, which to-fore
 Had by the belly oft him pinched sore;
 Upon his head a wreath that was enrolde
 With ears of corne of every sorte, he bore;
 And in his hands a sickle he did holde,
 To reap the ripened fruits the which the earth had yold."

* * * * * *

"Yet since thou wilt an idle tale of mine
 Take one which scarcely is of worth enough
 To give or to withhold."

MR. AND MRS. CROWNSHIELD were very much missed from the happy circle at Fleetwood. Nothing more was seen or heard of Gaston, and all felt relieved by his absence, while many happy hours were spent around the hearth in social pleasures.

Hallowe'en drew on, when young and old engaged in much sport, with many amusing frolics.

The Earl, Guy, Louis, Rorey and Julien, with Kathryn, Annie, Flora and Edith Langhorn, the steward's pretty daughter, and Marie, stood aside watching the sport as the rustic youths and maidens performed the witches' dance and made the grand right-and-left around the bonfire, which is performed thus:

An equal number of lads and lassies march to music around the fire, the lassies all veiled in sheets. At a signal they begin the grand right-and-left. Suddenly all stop, facing their partners. Whoever they happen to hold by the hand, the young man makes a guess as to who she is. If his guess is correct, he has found a partner for life.

Now, after the rustic youths and maidens had enjoyed this sport for a time, Rorey and Julien suggested that they should all join in and promenade around the fire, make the grand right-and-left, and thus have their own fates decided in the midst of the merry scene.

The others consented. The Earl marched with Kathryn, followed by Guy and Annie, Louis and Flora, Rorey and Edith, Julien and Marie.

With much care Lady Hawren, Madame and Mrs. Macleod had veiled the girls so that they might not be identified.

They marched around the bright fire, chatting pleasantly and keeping time to the soft music. Presently the signal was given for the grand right-and-left, with quick music. Then, at a signal, each young man stopped with the partner he then held by the hand.

Now, the Earl, hoping he held Kathryn by the hand, guessed her name, but when she revealed herself, behold! it was Miss Hamilton. And so with the others, Guy finding he held Flora's hand instead of that of Miss Hamilton; Louis, instead of Flora, whom he had guessed, finds he has Kathryn; and Julien, feeling sure of having Marie, his own little countrywoman, finds he has Edith, while Rorey finds his partner to be Marie. All of which misguessing afforded much merriment. Hortense, Hilda and Laura, dressed as witches, were among those in and out among the shadows making tea.

Returning to the great hall, pumpkin pie and coffee, grapes, apples, nuts and other delicacies, especially the large nut cake, with many candles around it, and the finest cider, were served by little witches in black and little ghosts in white. Then they had the unwinding of the witches' ball, which created much fun.

Afterward bowls of water, coffee and tea were placed upon the table, in order to show the maids whether they were to be wives, by being blindfolded and dipping a finger in one of the bowls. She who dips in water will be a wife; she who touches coffee will be a widow; but she who dips into the tea will be a solitary old maid.

Annie, on being led up, after a little hesitation, and feeling about, dipped into the bowl of tea, and was greeted with shouts of laughter and the clapping of hands. And Kathryn said:

"There, Annie, you are to live alone and drink tea for the remainder of your life." At one side Rorey and Julien were having grand sport watching a number of children ducking for apples afloat in a tub of water.

After these sports were ended the Earl and the ladies entered the spacious sitting-room, where was a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth. They were soon joined by Guy and Louis and the two pages. After the circle was complete, Lady Hawren said:

"How we do miss Mr. Crowningshield and dear Mrs. Edmonds!"

"Mother, you must say Mrs. Crowningshield," corrected Kathryn lightly.

"Yes, dear, I know; but she left so soon after her marriage that we had not used ourselves to the change."

"Fortunate man, was Mr. Crowningshield," observed Guy.

"She is indeed a charming lady, and we do greatly

miss them both," returned the Earl. "By the way, Lady Hawren, I have not told you I met in Carlisle to-day an old friend of the Arranton family—he promised to come and visit you some time."

"He knows the Arrantons? I shall be glad to meet him," she returned.

"He is from Ayr, and said his father and General Arranton had fought side by side in a number of battles."

"His name, my Lord?" asked Lady Hawren.

"Major Huntly—his father was General Huntly."

"Oh, I have heard General Arranton speak of General Huntly, who was one of his warmest friends."

"I believe he said, too, they were related by affinity."

"Yes, my Lord; General Arranton's wife was a Huntly—descended from the Earl of Huntly, who was once regent of Scotland."

"Oh, mother! Will you not tell us the story of our ancestors—away back in the days of Mary, Queen of Scotland? This is Hallowe'en, and we must have a story," said Kathryn.

"Yes, dear aunt," seconded the Earl; "methinks this a most favorable time for a story, or story-telling."

"A story! A story!" echoed Guy.

"Do, Lady Hawren," insisted Annie. "Let us chase away the hours till midnight with tales of other days."

"A story! A story!" shouted the boys.

"I must acknowledge I am not gifted as a story-teller," returned Lady Hawren, "but am willing to do my best."

"Yes, Lady Hawren, I beg of you; I am sure you will succeed admirably," cried the Earl, earnestly.

Lady Hawren sat in an easy-chair on one side of the fire. At her right was a sofa, which had been wheeled around, on which sat Kathryn and Flora, who were fast friends. In front of the fire the Earl

sat, in a high-backed leather-lined chair. The others ranged on the other side. And thus around the cheery fireside, shut in from the world, Lady Hawren tells the tale of the Arrantons:

"I will not go back over two hundred years with my story, but begin with the Earl of Arran, who was a Hamilton, and was a high tempered, fiery old man, and was related by affinity to the Earl of Bute—a Stuart. A deadly feud had long existed between these two noblemen, and so inveterate was this feud that they indulged in almost perpetual warfare.

"The Earl of Bute had one only child—the fair Lady Elva, who was to become his heiress, inheriting his vast wealth.

"Ronald, second son of the Earl of Arran, loved the Lady Elva, heiress of Bute, and was beloved by her. On one occasion, in the din of battle, amid fire and smoke, while all was in an uproar, by the aid of a faithful old servant, Fingal Ronald succeeded in stealing her away, and they were secretly married by Anselm, her Father Confessor, priest of Rothsay. She had no attendant save her old nurse, Alsey. Eluding the vigilance of the indignant Earls, they escaped from the island at midnight in a boat. Sailing along under the projecting brow of the Dunoon, they thought soon to cross the kyles of Bute and reach Gourock, where they had friends who would protect them from the infuriated Earls, their fathers. But a high wind coming upon them, they were, in spite of their efforts to the contrary, carried rapidly down the Firth of Clyde. They had observed from the start that "Aunt" Alsey clung with tenacity to a burden of great bulk, and apparent heavy weight, which she carried tied in a plaid and swung across her broad shoulders, refusing to relinquish it at any time, using it for a seat when she sat down. When morning dawned, they found themselves in the mouth of a beautiful river, which

proved to be the Doon, on the coast of Ayrshire. They gladly pulled up stream, and now, feeling secure from the irate Earls, greatly enjoyed the picturesque scene along the banks O'Doon. Far up this river, near the foot of the mountains, they came to a placid lake. Here, the lowlands and highlands uniting, formed a romantic and delightful scene. And in this lovely place, amid the charming surroundings, in a wild and secluded region, Ronald Arranton, as he now called himself, in order to avoid detection, selected a spot for his home. And now it was that Alsey brought forth her heavy burden, and laid it at the feet of her young mistress and the young lord, saying: 'My dear children, this have I saved for you from pillage and fire; it is yours. You will need it in this strange land.' It proved to be a well-bound box containing a great, and most valuable, part of the treasure of the Earl of Bute, which the old woman, finding an opportunity amid the smoke and din of battle, had brought away with her for the use of her young mistress, saying she had followed some pillagers into the vault and had succeeded in securing this chest before they reached it. But Ronald and Elva refused to make use of it, thinking that it did not rightly belong to them. Ronald, with the aid of good Father Anselm, who had accompanied them, and Fingal, built him a structure of ample size, of such material as abounded immediately around; not disdaining to labor with his own hands, he soon had formed them a sylvan home, where they lived in peace and great happiness for many months, when they heard that the Earl of Arran had received wounds in the battle, on the night of their departure, from which he had since died; that the Earl of Bute had been executed for causing an uprising against the government, and his estates had been confiscated. Then they felt no compunction of conscience in using the treasures saved to them by the

faithful Alsey. Then Ronald secured to himself much fine lands lying south of Doon, and built a strong castle, for now there began to be civil wars and uprisings, and this place, in time, became a great stronghold of much consequence during stormy periods—a safe retreat in dangerous times. After a time Ronald was found to merit the honor of chivalry, and the dignity of knighthood was bestowed upon him. After Sir Ronald's death, the rank of Baron was conferred, by patent, on his eldest son Donald, with much fine land, under the name of Montstuart and Strathdoon. This, in connection with his own possession of Arranton, gave him control of all the fine lands lying in the southern portion of Ayrshire. After five generations had passed away, Sir Robert Arranton, Baron of Montstuart and Strathdoon, having acquired much wealth, yielded a great influence in the country, exercising great authority, and became one of the most accomplished political leaders of the period. Many times, with his army of tumultuous followers, he exercised hostility against the crown. Then, on a time, the Catholic nobles entered into a conspiracy against the king, which was discovered. The most prominent leaders, among whom was Sir Robert Arranton, Baron of Montstuart and Strathdoon, were arrested and executed on charge of hostility against His Majesty. The title and estates bestowed on him by the king have been held in abeyance ever since, now near eighty years. Donald Arranton, my late husband's uncle, still lives in the grand old castle at Arranton, where we once enjoyed a most pleasant visit, with General and Mrs. Arranton. The charming mountain scenery forms a lovely background, while in front lies the placid Loch Doon, spreading like a mirror, finely fringed around with copse-wood, with here and there large trees, gracefully mirrored in its silvery depths. Donald, who was married during our visit to a daugh-

ter of the Earl of Athole, was still hoping that the title and estates would be restored, for his ancestors, during the last four generations, have lived much in peace, and with generous zeal have devoted themselves to the government; and, indeed, the Duke of Hamilton once set about having it accomplished; but at that time there was much opposition in Parliament, and the matter was dropped."

As Lady Hawren's story closed, the Earl drew forth a small tablet and pencil, requesting her to give him all the names of the Arrantons, from General Arranton to Sir Robert, which she did, he taking them down carefully. Lady Hawren's story was much enjoyed by all.

Then Miss Hamilton called on the Earl for his quota of the evening's entertainment.

"Oh, you will, my Lord! I am so fond of legends and traditions. You will tell us something on that line?" asked Annie.

"My Lord, a story! A story!" the boys cried.

"That will be something new for me, I assure you. Story-telling is no more in my line than singing, in which lovely art I could never excel."

"My Lord," said Kathryn, "will you not give us the story of Weirwolf? I am sure there must be a story back of that name. How did your ancestors merit the name of Weirwolf? And what signification is attached to it? My Lord, you will find that I am good at asking questions, if I cannot tell a story."

"There is, Lady Kathryn, a kind of wavering tradition of the founding and naming of Weirwolf, and apropos a story of All Hallow's Eve, which I shall take pleasure in relating if your Ladyship and the company be pleased to listen."

It was signified by all that the story would be most welcome.

How grand and handsome he was as he sat erect

in his chair, facing the glowing fire, the flickering rays of light throwing a ruddy glow over his fine features. Throughout the whole story Kathryn sat with her eyes fastened on his face, as though fascinated, only at times, when he seemed to be addressing his story to her especially, he turned his beaming eyes upon her; then how beautifully her face would flush and her tell-tale eyes were shielded beneath their drooping lids.

“Our genealogical tree takes us back far into the dark ages, to the Roman invasion and Galwegian Independence. For centuries our ancestors were noted in war—rebellions, conquests, conspiracies and downfalls. Some fell in honorable warfare; others were executed—beheaded or hanged—for in many instances they adhered with tenacity to the weaker side, thus losing their extensive domains. My grandfather succeeded his father, Ethelwyn, ‘noble joy,’ and he his father, Bertwolf, ‘illustrious wolf’—they held tenaciously to the old Saxon names, even down to my grandfather, who was Deorwyn, ‘dear one.’ Bertwolf was a brave and powerful baron, whose influence extended from the English border very far up into Scotland. The family residence is beautifully situated on the Esk, built up in days long past. The family was founded by St. Coelwulf, king of Northumberland, said to have been a man of some learning, who abdicated his throne in 738, retiring to the Holy Island to do penance for his sins. There he founded a monastery, and died as a saint. Although Coelwulf died as a saint, it is said that after he retired to Holy Island he indulged the Monks, whose rule hitherto had confined them to milk and water, with the comforts of wine and ale. It is thought by some that the penance vaults, founded by Coelwulf, were intended for a more genial purpose—that of a wine cellar. Away back in those days there was one, Siegfred, whose name signifies ‘peace of victory,’ a noble, manly fellow”—Kathryn’s eyes glowed

with a lovely light as she looked upon him and thought, "just like my Lord Clifton!"—"Who loved and was beloved by one, Elfrida, or Elfie, as she was called, 'the little elf.' A castle he had built of round stones, and though 'twas not a great castle like this, it was very substantial. He held all the lands for many, many miles around the place where the old Weirwolf Hunting Tower now stands, in the southern part of the Caledonian Forest; he also had built the old church, the ruins of which may be seen nearby. The Tower was built of gray stone, but *how* it was ever constructed with so much durability as to remain standing to this day, is beyond the ken of man. It is built perfectly round, a winding stair of stone steps built in the wall running round and round the entire way to the lofty platform, whence may be had a view of the charming scenery abounding along the lovely river winding through the valleys below. Elfie was beloved by another, her cousin Ethelwolf, who was of an evil nature. Elfie knew that she loved Siegfred, though she smiled on Ethelwolf occasionally. It may be that she was, as most young ladies are said to be, just a little coquettish. Ethelwolf, whenever she deigned to smile on him, was nearly wild with delight, so great was his love for her. But when she turned coldly from him, as she often did, he was mad with jealous rage. It was whispered around that Ethelwolf was gifted with occult powers, whereby he might change himself into the form of a fierce, wild, or weird shaggy wolf, called the weirwolf, and would often, when angry, avail himself of this magical power, lying around under the copse, or in furz and high grass on the heather, seeking to pounce upon and destroy whoever had the temerity to offend him. Thus would he whenever Elfie turned from him to smile on Siegfred endeavor to slay him. Siegfred, somehow, always escaped the Weirwolf,

though he could not, with all his endeavors, dispatch him, for as often as he struck at the weirwolf his spear would miss the mark. And, besides, it was whispered that the seeress of the community had said that no hand save that of a woman, and that after the hour of midnight, might slay the weirwolf. There came a time—Hallowe'en—when there was to be a celebration on the heath, which was to last till the 'wee sma' hours.' The moon being at her full, it was a glorious night. Ethelwolf wished to accompany his cousin Elfie, and asked her permission beforehand; but she refused him, saying she would go with Siegfred. All day he sulked at home, lying on his bed—he lived with Elfie's parents—but at nightfall he departed, no one knew whither. The young people out on the greensward frolicked in the moonlight, and, having built a bonfire, they roasted chestnuts and played many merry games. Presently there was a scattering of the crowd, with much screaming, for they had seen the dim form of the weirwolf lurking amid the heather under the edge of the copse-wood, lashing his tail and displaying his fierce and hideous teeth, his fiery eyes flashing in the light of the blazing fire. The young men rallying, several spears were hurled at the weirwolf, to no effect. Siegfred stood ready to make his effort, when the seeress approached from the background, crying out, in a prophetic voice: 'The weirwolf will never be slain by the hand of man; but place thy spear in the hand of the Elf-child who stands by thy side, then behold what comes of it.' All stood gazing, in great excitement, while Siegfred placed his great spear in the trembling hands of the fearful Elfie. She drew back the long shaft—almost as much as she could lift—and sent it into the copse-wood, where there was only a faint glimpse of a dark object, lashing the heather. All stood expectant, awaiting to behold what execution had been accom-

plished; then some of the bolder spirits ventured to draw near the spot. There was nothing to be seen, save the shaft of the broken spear, the head having been broken off and was nowhere to be seen, and much blood on the soft heather. In vain they searched amid the heathery copse—the weirwolf was not found. Returning home, they retired to rest. Next morning Ethelwolf was found dead upon his bed, all covered with blood, a spear-head in his side.”

“Oh, my Lord,” cried Lady Hawren, when the Earl had finished; “you must not say again that you are no story-teller! Your tale has been told with the art of a gifted raconteur.”

The Earl smiled his thanks.

“My Lord,” said Kathryn, with flaming cheeks, “how fearful it was for the pretty little Elfie to slay the beast with her own little hands, then to find the bad cousin dead; but did they—did she marry the one she loved?”

“Yes, my Lady; and they were the founders of the family, and built a new castle further up the glen, and called it Weirwolf, much of which substantial structure is still standing, and every one who succeeds to the estate must assume the arms and name of Weirwolf.”

“And the arms, my Lord?”

“Have a representation of a shaggy, snarling wolf, lurking, half hidden, in the heather; a broken spear in his side. The crest is an arm holding a broken spear shaft.”

“Oh, I should like to visit Weirwolf, and see the old castle and environments,” sighed Lady Kathryn.

“I promise your Ladyship shall see it next September. If nothing intervenes, we will take up our abode for a month, at least, at the old Tower, for the grouse season. It has long been our custom to spend a month or more each year, hunting thereabout. I am

sure you will be pleased with the place. It is situated in the remains of the old Caledonian Forest, where the character of the scenery is uncommonly beautiful. The ancient Tower stands on the River Esk, rearing its dusky crest amid the clouds, and seen from a distance appears to be rising from the winding river. Far to the north from that place, this lovely river rises in the mountains, flowing, with many a graceful turn, through the peaceful woodlands. Nearby is a small lake, called the Lake of Pearl, on account of its placid waters, surrounded by creeping vines and shrubs, and abounding in fishes, where you ladies may indulge to your hearts' content in capturing the shining perch."

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Annie. "My Lord, how can we ever thank you sufficiently?"

"Yes, for giving us such glorious anticipations, my Lord—to say nothing of the realizations of such delightful sport," exclaimed Kathryn, with enthusiasm. And meeting from the Earl a glance of fond admiration, her dark eyes drooped beneath their fringed canopy.

"I can assure you fine sport, ladies, for Weirwolf chase abounds in game of all sorts—black deer, hart and hind; pheasants, partridges, grouse and other small game. But a little distance from the Tower is a placid lake called Loch Earn, from which a small streamlet, hastening on, empties itself into the Esk. In the center of this lake is an islet, where the Earn, or Scottish eagle, annually builds its nest. A short distance from this lake a cascade, from a great height, falls in gloomy grandeur. The soothing roar from this waterfall is heard from the ladies' pavilion, producing a soothing and soporific lullaby."

"Oh, how delightful!" they all cried, with some clapping of hands.

"Oh, how glorious to be lulled to sleep by the soft

cadence of the cascade," cried Kathryn. "Pray, proceed, my Lord."

"And," continued the Earl, "near this pavilion are bright waters gushing, cool from the fount. Gay, sparkling birds are seen to wing the air; their warblings at eve from tall treetops are heard far down into the deepening twilight; and when morning's earliest beams come glimmering through the leafy screen, smiling on the dreamy brow of night, throwing a silver sheen over the river's peaceful breast, and rousing the drowsy huntsmen from their leafy beds to hasten out with hawk and hound——"

"Oh, my Lord," cried Annie, who sat on the opposite side of the fire, on a sofa beside Guy, who had thus, for the first time, ventured to draw so near to the lady whom he had for so long a time been worshipping at a distance, "how we shall long for the time to come, for it is near a year off yet."

"Oh, Flora, shall we ever live to see that happy time and place?" cried Kathryn, turning to Flora, who sat beside her, holding her hand.

"I have seen the place already, Lady Kathryn, and just such happy times."

"Dearest, have you seen it, and is it indeed so delightful?"

"I can assure you it is lovely, Lady Kathryn—almost beyond description, though my Lord has pretty nearly done it justice."

"My Lord," asked Kathryn, "do you love the chase?"

"My Lady, I have, in no ordinary degree, a passion for the chase—it is inherent in my nature."

"He exhibits remarkable address, too, Lady Kathryn, in bringing down the game," said Louis, "and is ready alike with his gun and his couteau de chasse."

"Aye!" cried the Earl enthusiastically.

“Aye! when the huntsmen wind the merry horn,
And from the covert starts the fearful prey;
Who, warmed with youth’s blood in his swelling veins,
Would, like a helpless clod, outstretched lie,
Shut out from all creation offers.”



CHAPTER XVII.

CHRISTMAS AT FLEETWOOD.

“Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas grow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With the lightsome green of ivy and holly;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log’s roaring tide;
The broad-flame pennons droop and flap,
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind:
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Haunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest’s tangled dark,
Like herds of startled deer.”

A SHORT time after Hallowe’en, the Earl had gone to Edinburgh, thence back to Weirwolf, where he was detained until near Christmas, when he hastened back to Fleetwood to enjoy the holiday with his friends, where he arrived on Wednesday, five days before Christmas, for Christmas came on Tuesday. Lady Hawren met him in the great hall with a warm welcome. He threw off his hat and shook back his silken curls; but, not waiting for him to drop his cloak, she drew him into the warm sitting-room, saying as she did so:

“Oh, my Lord, you are cold and all sparkling with snow! Do come in immediately to the fire and warm yourself, while a fire is being made in your own room.”

Kathryn rose, her face blanched to marble whiteness. She and her mother had been seated here alone, with their embroidery. His face glowed with pleasure on finding her here, and, advancing, he pressed her hand warmly and asked how she had been since he had left.

"And how have you been, my Lord?" asked Lady Hawren. "Have you enjoyed the trip?"

"Thank you, dear aunt; I have enjoyed the finest of health, and my visit has been most pleasant."

"And Rorey had a pleasant visit with his mother?" enquired Lady Hawren.

"Oh, yes, indeed! He enjoyed it very much, too; but now he will not see her again for some time. I took my aunt to Edinburgh, where she will remain for two years, perhaps, in order the better to educate the little girl, Nora, her protégée; besides, it was lonely for her at Weirwolf since I left with Rorey."

"My Lord, I wish she had come to spend Christmas with us; I was at least hoping she would do so," said Lady Hawren.

"I thank your Ladyship most heartily. She no doubt would enjoy it very much, but was anxious to have Nora in school. She will now spend Christmas with some friends and relations. I have made arrangements for them to reside in Edinburgh for some time, where my aunt has many relations and oldtime friends, and will, I trust, be much happier. She has missed Rorey much since I took him away. They had never before been separated. But, my dear Lady Hawren and Lady Kathryn, you are to have company, if you can pardon me for taking so much liberty. I have invited Lord and Lady de Bruce, and Misses Bruneagh, Lady de Bruce's nieces, to spend Christmas and remain over Twelfth-night with you. They are very old friends of our family. I was, therefore, anxious to have you meet them. I assure you, they

are most elegant people. I know you will be delighted with them," bowing to Lady Kathryn, who had scarce spoken.

"Thank you, my Lord," she said, somewhat regaining her composure, her face growing rosy. "I am charmed to have them; how very kind and thoughtful of you to ask them."

"Assuredly, my Lord. When may we expect them to arrive?" asked Lady Hawren.

"I will send the coach to Carlisle for them to-morrow; we may look for them about dusk on to-morrow eve."

"Of what ages are the young ladies?" asked Kathryn, innocently, manifesting great interest.

"Maybe that is not a fair question, Kathryn," observed Lady Hawren. The Earl smiled as he said:

"I could not say positively, my Lady, but I believe about twenty-eight and seventeen, respectively, Miss Bruneau being the eldest of the family and Miss Rosa the youngest, with four brothers between them, who are all married and settled down." Getting a little warm, he threw back his loose riding-cloak, disclosing his superb form in an elegant shooting costume. An ivory-mouthed bugle, beautifully carved in rich characters, hung by his side. He spoke again, his voice soft and richly melodious.

"Lord and Lady de Bruce have just returned from Paris, and are having some alteration and improvement done on their city residence, and it would be more pleasant for them here just now, besides affording us the pleasure of their company. They have resided in Paris the past year, where Miss Rosa has attended the Conservatoire de Paris. Lord de Bruce is of Scotch-French blood, and owns immense property in Scotland—is considered one of the most wealthy Scotch Lords. He was for a time Colonel of a regiment of Irish in western Scotland a number

of years ago, where he married Marjorie Macdonald, of pure Scotch blood, and descended from a noble family. Misses Bruneau are her sister's children, and orphans, whom Lady de Bruce has cared for from their infancy."

"Oh," said Lady Hawren, "I know we shall love them all!"

"Aye, indeed, dear aunt; I do—that is, I already love Lord and Lady de Bruce," he said, rising to repair to his apartments, "but the young ladies I have barely met." Lady Hawren gave him a sly glance, with an arch smile, which was not observed by Kathryn, as much as to say:

"My Lord, I believe you claim to have fallen in love with one whom you had scarcely met." He, comprehending, smiled, his face flushing, and a little confusedly he said:

"But I must repair to my own room." And, turning to Kathryn, said:

"Dear cousin, I ask your pardon for sitting in your presence in my riding-cloak and boots; but your mother—I cannot resist her Ladyship," with a bow and a smile toward Lady Hawren.

"But you were cold, my Lord, having had a long ride through the drifting snow," exclaimed Lady Hawren, from the warmth of her kind heart.

He bowed low to Kathryn, who, curtsying with her sweetest smile, said:

"No apologies are necessary, my Lord."

Reaching the door, he turned and said:

"Oh, Lady Hawren; I forgot to mention that Lord and Lady de Bruce and the young ladies all know your uncle, Count Dubois-Raymond, and his lovely family in Paris."

"Oh, do they?" exclaimed Lady Hawren. "That will be glorious to have mutual friends in Paris! My

Lord, I thank you so much for your kind thoughtfulness in inviting them to visit us."

He again bowed, and, with a lingering glance and smile toward Kathryn, he left the room.

Next morning the Earl decided that he himself would go to Carlisle and accompany the ladies and Lord de Bruce out to the castle.

In accordance with the plan, he set about urging Lady Hawren to accompany him, as there would be plenty of room in the coach for the six. He would send the road-wagon along for the luggage and the attendants. Lady Hawren, thinking how she would enjoy a drive in the Royal old coach on this delightfully cool, crisp December day, and how much more friendly and hospitable it would appear for her to accompany the Earl to fetch them, consented. On the way the Earl had opportunity for much conversation with Lady Hawren, and to ask her if now he might declare his love to Lady Kathryn and speak to her on the subject of marriage. Lady Hawren had been observing the trend of matters, and knew well that Kathryn loved him with her whole heart, but yet she hesitated, and said:

"Oh, my Lord, she is young—too young, possibly, to know her own mind. You can wait yet."

"Wait! Dear aunt, I have waited; and have tried to restrain my impatience! Oh, surely you will not deny me now! I must leave for London next day after Christmas—I must tear myself away to attend the session of Parliament, after which I go to Paris for a time. There is no knowing when I shall return to Fleetwood—it may be six months; possibly I shall not return before August. Dear aunt, am I to leave without speaking? Surely you will not forbid a declaration of my love!" he said, imploringly, as he seized her hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Then, my Lord, wait till the festivities have reached their height, or have about closed——"

"Oh, I beg you to remember that I leave next morning after Christmas, early. I appeal to your Ladyship's kindness of heart; you will not cause me to suffer so long a time!"

"Then some time before you leave, my Lord, if you are to be so long gone."

"Thank you! Oh, thank you, dear aunt!" he cried, with a happy countenance; then continued:

"Dear aunt, I have repeatedly been requested to present your Ladyship and your daughter at court, but have hesitated to do so—to even speak to you on the subject, until this moment——"

"Oh, my Lord, you know that Kathryn is but a child yet, and knows not the ways of the world!"

"My Lady, she is well fitted to grace the court of any king; but I have hesitated—I should dislike to have her presented among the gay and scandalous crowd that throng the court until she is my very own, and I have a husband's right to watch over and protect her"; his face was covered with blushes, as the coach drew up at the residence of Lord de Bruce.

Next morning at daybreak the unusual sound, at such an hour, of a bugle-blast from the courtyard was heard. The gates were thrown open, and a couple dashed forth toward Fleetwood chase—a young girl in a habit of Lincoln-green, followed by her old and ever-faithful attendant and a pair of fierce hounds. The girl was Rosa, Lady de Bruce's niece, who was an Amazon, unfettered by social restraint, and of a nature wild and free—a tomboy. But by the time breakfast was announced Rosa had returned and was ready, with a good appetite, to partake of the morning meal, her face all aglow after a five-mile ride in the frosty air.

Being seated at table, the Earl said pleasantly:

"Ah, Miss Rosa! Whither so early this morning?"

"I went out, my Lord, as is my custom, for a five-mile ride before breakfast. What a lovely forest you have! And I could have brought in a venison and a dozen quail had I been sure of meeting your Lordship's approbation."

"Surely, Miss Rose, all the game you may bring in from your morning rides will be no great loss to the gamekeeper," returned the Earl with a benevolent smile.

Two days were spent in pleasant conversation with Lord and Lady de Bruce and the young ladies, and showing them over the castle, which they found in that state of joyous confusion and pleasant anticipation as always precedes such great occasions. Next day, being the Sabbath, they attended services where

"The snow-white church upon the hill,

Sits like a throned lady, sending out a gracious look over
all her domain."

Monday the Earl, with Guy and Louis and the two pages, Rorey and Julien, took the ladies out to the forest to gather mistletoe and evergreens, for next day was Christmas. Two couples went horseback, the Earl and Kathryn, Louis and Rosa, while the others went in the coach. What a delightful ride was this, especially to the Earl and Lady Kathryn, for now the forest had become "a jewel-laden feminine thing" as they dashed along through the sparkling frost-leaved aisles. They gathered in the ivy and holly, as well as the mistletoe.

"Under the mistleto, pearly and green,
Meet the kind lips of the young and the old;
Under the mistleto, hearts may be seen
Glowing as tho they had never been cold.

Yet, why should this holy and festival mirth,
In the region of old Christmas only be found?
Hang up love's mistleto over the earth,
And let us kiss under it all the year round."

With the dawn of Christmas morn, announced by carols of joy, according to an ancient custom, and the ringing of joy-bells, came much happiness to the inmates of Fleetwood Castle; for here Christmas had been, from time immemorial, a season of joy; and this season of festivity was to last till twelfth-night. The walls were decorated with evergreens; bunches of mistletoe, especially, had been swung here and there, in hidden and unsuspected places; tables were loaded with chère exquisite; carols were sung; and on this occasion the Earl and Lady Hawren took care that the poor were not forgotten. The servants thronged the great hall and corridors, bowing and saluting all with good wishes, for at this season the interval between master and servants was not so great; and, as usual on such occasions, they were given much liberty. And they romped with much freedom "under the mistletoe, eating boar's head, and drinking ale, flavored with toasted apples."

The dinner hour arrived, which was a few hours earlier than usual, on account of a grand banquet to follow, which was to be served from nine to twelve o'clock.

The table for dinner had been arranged, old Scottish style, extended to a great length, that a number of the upper servants and attendants might sit at dinner with the gentle folks, who sat above the salt—a salt-cellar of silver, handsomely wrought, containing salt, placed in the center of the long table—the lower class took their places below the salt.

With exquisite delicacy the Earl placed Lord de Bruce in the place of honor, at the upper end of the table, with Lady de Bruce and Lady Hawren at his

left, modestly seating himself between Kathryn and Flora on his right.

Dinner was served with much ceremony. At the proper moment a stately procession entered. First came the musicians, who marched to the balcony appointed them; then followed the steward and butler and a long line of servants bearing various dishes; the pages stood at their places ready to attend the nobles. There was the roasted peacock, usual on such occasions, browned to a turn, and considered as a dish of exquisite delicacy; the smoking-hot goose, with dressing; the boar's head, crested with rosemary and bay leaves; fine sirloin, dripping with rich gravy; cloved ham with cider sauce, pigs and small fowls abounded in great variety, with plum pudding, Christmas pie, and bread of all kinds; pickles, preserves and fruits. The finest wines and best of ale were broached. Dinner passed pleasantly, and with much merriment. Stories were told of "knighthood's dauntless deeds and beauty's matchless eye," in which Lord de Bruce proved himself an amusing, impressive and most interesting story-teller.

The brief December day passed swiftly by, and its gray dawn soon darkened into night. As evening drew on, some of the neighboring gentry who had been invited to the banquet arrived. Lord Phantomfell, Lord Beenville, Sir William Gray and Doctor Godkins, who was descended from one of the noblest houses of North England; also the neighboring clergyman, whose society was greatly enjoyed by Mr. Hayston, the chaplain, though holding different views from those held by himself. The banquet was superb, but when wine began to flow freely and the reveling commenced, the ladies rose to return to the drawing-room, and were accompanied by Lord de Bruce, Doctor Godkins and the Earl, who made it their rule never to indulge in more wine than was proper to use in the

presence of the ladies, leaving the clergymen and the young lords to the care of Louis and Guy. Louis, being of a convivial nature, was a jovial companion, and especially a singer of good songs; while Guy was a mild and a pleasant entertainer, indulging in much mirth and good humor.

Doctor Godkins and Annie, with gold-colored flowers in her dusky hair, promenaded up and down the magnificent great hall, in one end of which the Christmas fire roared and crackled in the yawning fireplace, where was "the oaken log, green, huge and thick, and on its top the stout back stick," etc. The hall was further lighted by the flaming tongues of a great candelabrum. Flora, with the Misses Bruneau, Rorey and Julien, were flitting hither and thither. Now and then Rorey or Julien would catch one, unsuspecting, under a bough of mistletoe, and, claiming the forfeit, there would be a tussle, with the fair one resisting the osculation, and much merriment from the others.

The Earl had led Lady Kathryn to an aerial window reaching out from the library, apart from their merry companions. Two odoriferous Arabesque censers near the door threw a fitful and subdued light over them.

"Dear cousin," he said, "you know that on tomorrow morn I must leave you—I must say good-bye. I am to take up my abode in London for a great length of time. Months must elapse ere I shall be permitted to see you, sweet cousin, again."

"My Lord," she returned softly, "I do not wish to bid you good-bye."

"I shall be absent until August, doubtless—near eight months hence—will return in time for our great hunting party at the old Tower of Weirwolf."

"That is a long time," she murmured, all atremble.

"Attendance on Parliament and official duties will

keep me away. I will open up my city residence, and London will be my home for the greater part of the incoming year."

"I shall not be present, my Lord, when you take leave."

"Shall I, then, say good-bye here—now?"

"No, my Lord; I cannot say good-bye."

"Lady Kathryn, will you remember your promise to me?"

"I will, my Lord."

"You will not go out alone?"

"I will never break a promise to any one," she said, with a deep sigh, while a deadly pallor settled over her face and she trembled.

"Then, dear cousin, I should like to ask of you another promise—one that would make me happy and cheer me in my absence. If you——"

"No, no, my Lord! Do not! I cannot!"

"I must at least tell you that which I have so long wished—tell you of my——"

"My Lord, please take me to the fire; I am getting cold." Her face was of marble whiteness. He took her hands, which she had been wringing. They were cold; cold.

"My sweet, sweet cousin!" he cried, "are you ill? You are so cold!" She sighed heavily. Caressing her hands, he said:

"Forgive me for keeping you here, away from the fire. The room is quite warm to me; I had not thought of your being cold. Surely you are ill, my sweet cousin! Your face, but a moment ago glowing with warmth and loveliness, is now like the snow outside, which beneath the window lies." Noticing an appealing look in her eyes, he led her to the drawing-room, where a number were sitting around the fire listening to some war stories, related with great zest, by Lord de Bruce.

Kathryn sank upon a sofa which had been drawn up near the fire on one side, just within the deep embrasure of a window. Lord Clifton seated himself beside her, anxiously regarding her face, the soft velvet drapery from the windows forming a canopy over their heads.

Thus they sat, listening to Lord de Bruce's rehearsal of mighty deeds of valor, and sometimes conversing in low, soft tones.

At the approach of midnight, the banquet was growing loud, and fast flowed round the wine and ale. Lord Beenville, who appeared to be self-appointed toastmaster for the occasion, now rose, in an unsteady manner, and pledged a bumper to Miss Rose Bruneau, whom he denominated the Rose of Cumberland; to which many cheers were given and much wine was drunk.

Then after the guests who were able to keep their feet began to retire, and while Lord Phantomfell snored loudly in his chair, and Lord Beenville sat with closed eyes, Guy began to tease Louis, saying:

"I see plainly, Louis, you are fascinated with the vivacious little Amazon. Next we know you will be wanting to marry her."

"Marry her, Guy! I'd as soon take a bumblebee to my breast as that fiery little wasp—the little spitfire! By Saint Hubert, she hath the temper of a wild-cat, sir!"

"Hush!" whispered Guy, with a motion toward Lord Beenville. "You are rather outspoken. Lord Beenville is not always asleep when his eyes are shut. You know well his nature, Louis, to repeat all he happens to hear, adding more to it."

"Never fear him, he is in the land o' dreams."

"How is it, Louis, you rode in the forest with her yesterday, and have danced attendance in her wake all this day; how hath she awakened within your breast

such a storm of rage? Did not you, on her arrival here, pronounce her the most captivating little elf? Aha, Louis, perhaps you led her under the mistletoe, and, claiming the forfeit, were pointedly refused."

"True, too true! Guy, I did offer to kiss her under the mistletoe, and she slapped me roundly for my temerity."

"Ho! ho! ho!"

"The little hornet! I had no idea she would resent it, being under the mistletoe."

"Ho! ho! ho!"

"She told me plainly never to undertake to kiss her again, mistletoe or no mistletoe. Yet we are friends. But somehow to-night I feel to resent the slap the spirited little witch gave me, when I was anticipating a more pleasurable sensation."

"Aye, Louis, you have taken too much wine to-night. You will get over it. 'White hands cannot offend,' says Calomard."

Louis and Guy now entered the drawing-room, accompanied by Reverend Mr. Hayston. The young lords and the visiting clergymen, being too inebriate, had been sent to their appointed beds.

Mr. Hayston offered up a prayer of thanksgiving for the many mercies which had been showered upon them throughout the year.

Then, after an old custom, pages on bended knee presented to each the brimming cup of rich spiced wine from a deep silver bowl, and, amid a hum of merry light talk, they began to leave the rooms, to retire, each to his own apartment. The Earl and Kathryn, lingering yet a moment near the fire, he said:

"You are feeling better now?"

"Yes, yes, my Lord; I am not ill, I assure you."

"You will not let me depart without the pleasure of seeing you in the morning, dear cousin?"

"No, my Lord; I will be down to breakfast, but will not bid you good-bye."

"You will not?"

"No, my Lord."

"Then you will allow me to kiss your hand, here, now, before you go?"

"Oh, no!" She is about to flee.

"Yes! Wait!" He seizes her hands, warm enough now, presses them in his own, then kisses them both ardently. She tries to draw them away—to run after the others, now chatting in the hall, but he holds her hands, saying:

"Allow me to escort you," and leads her to the foot of the stairway; then pressed her hand warmly. She now drew away, and saying "Good-night," fled up the steps; overtaking Flora and Rose, she went up arm-in-arm with them. Now she was so happy, but her happiness was fitful, and she was most unhappy again by the time she reached her apartments.

Next morning His Lordship's coach and six stood in the courtyard near the castle gates. Attendants thronged the court—coachmen, postillions, outriders, hackneys—all in Fleetwood livery.

The family, with the guests, had gathered in the breakfast parlor. Lady Kathryn came down late—so late that Lord Clifton had begun to fear that she might not come—and after the morning salutation she slipped quietly into her accustomed seat beside the Earl. She looked superb in a rich velvet costume, most becoming and tasteful; her face was of a delicate peach-pink.

She was charming, and joined in the table-talk with uncommon zest and vivacity. The Earl admired her much, and thought her more brilliant than he had ever before known her.

Lord Phantomfell was with Annie; Lord Beenville, looking remarkably well after his excessive indulgence

the night previous, sat beside Rosa, near the farther end of the table, at Lady Hawren's right, and was just now saying to her in an undertone:

"I have somewhat to tell thee after breakfast, Miss Rosa, my little friend, if you will but grant me opportunity for a little private talk," with a furtive glance from under his heavy eyebrows toward Louis, rolling his eyes round, without raising or turning his head. Louis was devoting himself to Miss Bruneau, and did not notice the glance.

Sir Willie Gray sat beside Flora.

The Earl noticed that Kathryn ate nothing, but only pretended to eat. When the meal was over and all stood chatting about the glowing fire in the charming breakfast parlor, he went from one to another saying good-bye, each wishing him a safe or a pleasant journey and a speedy return. On turning to speak to Kathryn, he found she had disappeared. As he passed into the drawing-room he heard Lady Hawren saying to her guests:

"Now I will show you through the conservatory, where we have some charming exotics and tropical luxuries in the way of blooming flowers."

In the drawing-room he saw no one. He had hoped to find Kathryn here. How his heart throbbed as he started on to his room to don his traveling cloak and furs! Passing near the doorway leading from the drawing-room to the library, screened only with rich hangings, he heard a gentle sigh. Lifting the tapestry, he saw Lady Kathryn seated in front of the fire, her face in her hands, sobbing. She had not heard his step, for the soft carpet yielded no sound, but started at the rustling of the portières. On seeing Lord Clifton, she sprang to her feet, her face all suffused with tears.

Through the windowpanes, of tinted glass, rolled the

beams of the rising sun, flooding the room and the occupants with a crimson glow.

"My Lord, I—I supposed you had gone," she said, all a-tremble, for joy and anguish within her heart struggled for supremacy.

"Pardon the intrusion! I could not go without seeing you. I heard you sigh! Wherefore that sigh?" he asked, in a deep, mellow voice, her hands in his own. "Darling, surely now you will listen to me—let me tell you how I love you! You must know that I love you, darling. My heart is all yours. I have loved you since first we met—since the first passing glimpse I had of you in the coach my heart has had no rest. Darling, can you—do you love me?" She raised her eyes to his, so soft and expressive, yet she could not speak. "Your eyes speak! I cannot be mistaken," he exclaimed, clasping her in his strong arms. "You do love me! Speak, darling, and tell me that you love me; that you will be mine—be my bride when I return. Then will I have something to look forward to—something to hope for——"

"No, no, my Lord! I cannot; I cannot," she cried brokenly. "Oh, my heart will break!" Her face assumed the cold pallor of death. She swooned in his arms, and so death-like was she, as he held her to his breast, that he was much frightened, and cried out: "Marie! Marie!"

Someone entered now.

"Oh, Miss Annie, is it you? Lady Kathryn has swooned," he said.

"Oh, what is to be done?" cried Annie, who had not gone with the others to the conservatory, and was just passing out when she heard his call for Marie.

"Place her here on the couch, my Lord, and run for her mother, or Mrs. Macleod," said Annie, excitedly. Just then Marie appeared and ran to Annie's assist-

ance. The Earl soon returned with Mrs. Macleod, whom he had found in the breakfast parlor, adjoining the drawing-room. Marie brought water, Annie ran to her own room to fetch a restorative, and Mrs. Macleod was bathing Kathryn's face. She now opened her eyes and, sighing deeply, looked up into his face. The Earl, losing self-control, dropped on his knees beside her, caught her in his arms, kissed her lips and strained her to his breast; then, rising hastily, he clasped Mrs. Macleod's hand, saying:

"Take good care of her for me, Mammie," and, rushing from the room, he met Annie returning, hastily, with a volatile. Bidding her good-bye again, he was soon in his coach and on his way to London.



CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EVENING AT FLEETWOOD CASTLE.

"Oh, happy as the gods is he,
Who listens at this hour to Thee."

THE Earl wrote regularly to Lady Hawren, keeping her in touch with his movements, informing her of his political triumphs and his social successes; the sittings of Parliament; of King and courtiers. Since the adjournment of Parliament he had been in a whirl of excitement; had gone to Paris for six weeks, in attendance on the Duke of Bedford, in company with a number of his friends. While there, had enjoyed a splendid visit with her uncle, Count Dubois-Raymond, and his most excellent family. Now, in his last letter, he said that by the last of August he would be with them again.

As Lady Hawren had written him that Edwin Arranton was now in Oxford, pursuing his studies in New College, he wrote that he would deem it a great pleasure, as he returned home, to come by that an-

cient city, make Edwin's acquaintance, and pay him a visit of a few days; and, as ever, closed his letter by sending much love to his gentle cousin, Lady Kathryn.

Great preparation was now being made in anticipation of his return, and every one, as usual after a prolonged absence, was on the *qui vive* for his coming.

Kathryn was determined hereafter to conduct herself toward him with the strictest decorum and dignity. She must never allow him to know that she loved him; it would be giving him encouragement to think she might wed him, when she realized that she could never do so; for she had made a solemn promise to the contrary. She must keep her promise. Besides, there were horrible accusations against him, and, though she could never believe them, she felt it her duty to give him no encouragement whatever. He must not read her secret in her eyes. She must never yield again to her feelings, as she had done, lest he should read her very heart and know how dearly she did love him. She felt so cold and miserable now—so hopeless. He should never speak of love to her again; she would not permit it. Thus she meditated in her own room, while being dressed, with much care, in pure white, with scarlet flowers in her hair and on her corsage. She now felt very brave and determined.

It was dusky twilight when he arrived. Sunset's light had fled, leaving but a shadow of what had been a bright and lovely autumnal day.

Lady Hawren, Mrs. Macleod and Flora met him in the hall, and greeted him with a most hearty welcome. He then proceeded to his room to change his traveling suit for one of evening wear.

Kathryn had decided that she would meet him in the drawing-room, with great decorum, in the presence of the invited guests. She descended with her

arm around Annie's waist, and accepted a seat beside Doctor Godkins, talking and laughing with assumed gaiety, while Annie and Lord Phantomfell sat near, conversing pleasantly.

The Earl now entered, with Guy Brignol, attended by Louis and Rorey, who had been absent with him.

All rose at once to greet them. The Earl was superb in the latest French style. Instead of the long curls, he wore his hair in side tresses and queue, tied with a soft ribbon. His dress, always simple, was of exquisite make—coat longer than the usual cut, and collarless; vest shorter than formerly; long cuffs reaching his elbows; breeches buckled below the knee, instead of above; silk hose, low shoes with buckles; a falling band of richest lace enveloped his throat, the loosely tied ends falling over the vest front.

He shook hands cordially with his friends as he came to them. His eyes immediately sought out Kathryn. He wondered why she had not met him in the hall with her mother and others of the household.

At his first glance her face wore a charming pink tint, but by the time he had shaken hands with Annie, Lord Phantomfell and Doctor Godkins, and had reached her side, her face was like marble; her hand trembled in his clasp, as he gave it a gentle pressure, and passed on. She could scarcely stand while she greeted Louis and Rorey, who followed; then sank back in her seat beside the doctor. Hearing her quick breathing, he looked in her face, and saw that she was near swooning. Acting promptly, from his pocket he drew a little pouncet, and, giving it a vigorous shake, he placed it under her nostrils, while Rorey was seating His Lordship. The Earl of Fleetwood, being the center of attraction, all eyes were turned upon him, and no one observed this little by-play. The volatile having the desired effect, the doctor quickly returned

the pouncet to his pocket, and smiled knowingly on Kathryn, who, feeling grateful for his promptness in rendering her a service, and also being amused at the queerness of the act, smiled too, the blood mounting to her face and neck. The Earl, as he seated himself, observed the mutual glance, the smile, the blush, for his eyes had returned to her the moment he reached his seat, and wondered. The doctor, being a fascinating man and young enough, may he not have won her love?—his fearful heart asked of him.

But Doctor Godkins now rose, and making an obeisance to Lady Kathryn, crossed the room to where Lady Hawren stood conversing with Rorey and Louis, ostensibly for the purpose of telling her of a sick woman in the neighborhood, one of his patients, who needed help and attention; thus giving the Earl an opportunity to have a seat beside Lady Kathryn, of which he soon availed himself, while the doctor, standing beside Lady Hawren, was saying:

“What, indeed, is it, Lady Hawren, to the poor sufferer, though she be a Presbyterian, if you two in faith and love agree; while you, with generous deeds uplift the ‘pearl of Christian charity.’ I could point you, Lady Hawren, to others, too, who would be cheered by your gracious smile, but you know all the hypochondriacs and rheumatic old people in the neighborhood, who always accord you a gracious welcome and regard you with love and reverence, as do the rest of us——”

“Ho! ho! ho!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Louis and Rorey. The doctor smiled and Lady Hawren blushed. The Earl, gracefully crossing the room, asked permission to have a seat beside Lady Kathryn, which she granted by a mere inclination of the head, her heart throbbing so wildly she feared he must hear it, and really felt the need of another whiff of the doctor’s volatile, but

she made room for him beside her on the causeuse.

"Dear cousin, how glad am I to find myself once again in your presence——" He paused, feeling a little checked by her dignified and constrained bearing, but continued:

"I came by Oxford, and met, and had a most pleasant visit with, your cousin Edwin; and I beg to assure you I am much pleased with him. He is a manly fellow, and handsome as Apollo."

Kathryn was so delighted to hear news of her cousin, from whom she had so long been separated, that her dignity and reserve vanished at once, and she cried:

"Oh, the dear boy! Dear Edwin! You saw him, my Lord?" Her eagerness to hear from Edwin kindled a brilliant glow on her cheeks, her eyes flamed with enthusiastic interest. He gazed, enraptured, on her lovely face, changing from marble-like whiteness to a charming crimson.

"Yes, my Lady, I spent two days in Oxford, most of the time in his company."

"Is he well; and are his surroundings pleasant? Oh, my cousin! My Lord, will you kindly tell me of his situation in the old town of Oxford—and, oh, my Lord, could not he have come with you for a little while? I am dying to see him!"

"No, my dear cousin; he is earnestly engaged at present; is very diligent in his studies. His achievements at William and Mary, where he secured his degree, were remarkable. His health at present is fine, judging from his appearance."

"And his surroundings, my Lord; are pleasant?"

"All that could be wished, my Lady. The glory of New College, as is known to all the world, is its garden, whence he has a glimpse of the Spires and Towers; and where the enchantments of the Middle Ages still linger. Nothing, my dear cousin, could be

more complete than the beauty of his surroundings." Kathryn listened eagerly as Clifton talked and told her of Edwin's achievements at William and Mary, and of his surroundings at Oxford. Her eyes sparkled with intense feeling, and, under the excitement, she was singularly beautiful. The Earl regarded her with ardent pleasure. When supper was announced, he rose and courteously asked permission to escort her to the dining-hall.

During supper there was much discussion and deliberation in regard to the proposed hunt, which was to embrace the next three or four weeks, and preparation for this great pleasure party was to begin at once.

"My dear Lord Phantomfell, you are to accompany us," said the Earl.

"Thank you, my Lord! Shewly! I would not foh the wold miss this gweat tweat—no, not foh the wo'ld! It will be gwand! Splendid! Then there will be Miss Augustah and her little Amazonian sister—oh, not foah the wo'ld would I miss this tweat! Thank you, my Lord; thank you, suh!"

"Doctor, surely we are to have the pleasure of your company on this occasion; we could not well do without you," said the Earl.

"Ah, my Lord; I deplore the fact that I shall not be able to join your party, as much as I would like to do so. I shall be debarred the happiness."

"Oh, doctor, why are we to be deprived of your company?" asked Lady Hawren.

"My Lady, as much as I regret it, I am to spend the next two months in London, where our fraternity will meet, and be engaged in lectures and scientific researches. I beg to assure your Ladyship, it is nearly breaking my heart to be thus debarred this great pleasure of revisiting the scenes of my youth. I was brought up not far from the old Tower, and have

spent many happy days in Weirwolf chase. There is scarcely a brook or fell in this lovely region but has its legend, or story, written in my memory, to say nothing of being deprived of the pleasure of your Ladyship's charming company, and that of the other ladies who will be of your number," he said, graciously, with a bow and smile, in which he included all the ladies present. But he sighed as he ceased to speak, and there was an expression of sadness in his dark-brown eyes, usually so full of mirth.

"Oh, doctor; how we shall miss you! What a pity you must be called off to London, just as we want your company so very much!" said Kathryn, sympathetically. "I should regret to be deprived of this great pleasure his Lordship has in store for us."

"Yet, my Lady, I must betake myself to the world of art and science, while you and your friends indulge in the sports of Nimrod," he said, a little sadly. Then, more cheerfully, continued: "It would delight my heart to see you, Miss Hamilton," with a courteous bow to Annie, "mounted on a fleet hunter, dashing over field and fell, through the copse and hether wild, close onto the quarry, surrounded by the yelping pack——"

"Oh, doctor, do you insist on doing homage to Minerva, while we shall engage in the more pleasurable sports of Diana? I know not how we are to dispense with your society. This is to be my first attempt at the chase, and, as I am not familiar with the horse, I fear that I shall make but a poor display 'a-chasing the wild deer.'"

"And think you, you would not be able to keep your saddle all day, in a steady chase?" enquired the doctor.

"Oh, never! Never! I should die!"

"How is it with my Lady Kathryn; is not she a dextrous huntress?"

"Oh, Doctor Godkins, I also am a novice, and know little of the chase, but am proud to say I can manage a horse."

"Doctor, I can assure you she is a fine horsewoman," said Clifton, "and will make a huntress worth speaking of; will be able to follow the hounds through dingle and dell, where sport the hart and the roe."

Kathryn bowed and smiled her thanks for his commendation.

"You will do well, my Kate, if you keep pace with the Earl," said the doctor. "He is a huntsman of great skill and superiority, I can assure you," and, turning to Annie, he continued: "And, Miss Hamilton, you will soon become familiar with the exercise, and will be able, without emotion, to clear a hedge or leap a ditch."

"Doctor, I should not like to have you witness my first attempt at such a feat," she replied.

"Well; now there's Phantomfell will, I'm sure, delight in teaching you, Ma'am. He's an unrivaled huntsman; has been carefully trained in the craft, and can sit his horse all day without fatigue."

"Thank you, doctor; thank you, sir," said Phantomfell; "hunting has constituted an essential part of my education. I must say I inhewited the love fowh the chase—yes, inhewited it, you might say; have always been fond of field sports. Yes, Miss Hamilton, yes; I will take gweat delight, I do asuwah you, in diwecting youah equestwian feats; in leaping hurdle, hedge or ditch I will see that no misfowhtune shall happen to you. Yes, I will see to that, dear lady."

"My Lord, I thank you very much for your kindness," returned Annie, with a quick glance toward Louis and Guy, who both smiled. Returning to the drawing-room, the Earl led Kathryn back to the causeuse, where they sat, apart from the rest, for

the entire evening, conversing in a gentle murmur, altogether contrary to her expectation and previous determination. The separation had been of such long duration, they had much to engage them in conversation. While with charming converse and gay music Annie and Flora engage the rest of the party, "and sense and wisdom flow in sweet discourse."

Kathryn was repeatedly asked to sing, but Clifton had said to her :

"Dear cousin, as much as I should delight to hear your voice in sweet song, I prefer to have you by my side now that I have so much to say, and so many questions to ask as to how you have spent your time since we parted, so long ago." Thus she declined to sing, acquiescing to the Earl's wish, as well as to the promptings of her own heart; and said:

"My Lord, then you will tell me more of Edwin. How long ere we shall have him here with us?"

"In just one short year, my dear cousin, he will be here."

"Short year? Oh, my cousin, it will be to me the longest year!"

"Sweet cousin, it is not really necessary for him to remain in Oxford for more than one term more—he may be able to come earlier in the summer; that is, perhaps."

"Oh, my Lord! Perhaps—what mean you?"

"Dear cousin, be not anxious; he has only grown tired of so close application to the study of law, in which, I can assure you, he has made rapid advancement, and is inclined toward the military; is thinking some of joining the army, and is spending all his vacations training in the militia, where he has command of a company, and is looking forward to military service——"

"Oh, tell me not so!" she cried with emotion, dis-

may depicted on her face ; on seeing which he hastened to add :

" 'Tis only local militia, and could only be marched to service in the event of actual invasion."

"Ah, my cousin Edwin ! He was ever fond of military parade, my Lord, and was ever in training at home—in America."

"My cousin, he is enrolled only for discipline and instruction."

"Oh, my Lord, he will go away and become a soldier !" she cried, burying her face in her hands.

"Dear, dear cousin, I should not have told you this—I would not for the world cause you one moment's sorrow," he said regretfully.

"Listen while I shall tell you of Oxford—that beautiful old city of fine schools," he said, as one trying to pacify a spoiled child, removing her hands from her face and holding them in his own.

She raised her eyes, with teardrops trembling on their lids.

"My Lord, will you ; oh, will you tell me a story ?"

"Aye, my cousin ; I will take great pleasure in telling you a story relating to the ancient city. Oxford is so old a place that no one knows of its founding. There is a tradition that goes beyond the earliest history of the town."

"Oh, my Lord, I love traditions," she cried, withdrawing her trembling hands from his and seeking a little cambric handkerchief and applying it to her eyes, now radiant with beauty, beaming through her tears. "Please do, my Lord," she said eagerly.

"Then, first of all, I will tell you the charming story of St. Fridesyde," he said, smiling with delight at her eagerness, at the same time enraptured with her beauty. And thus he began :

"About the year 727 there lived in the place where Oxford now stands Didan, a prince who had a lovely

daughter. She being of a very religious turn, and wishing to separate herself from the world, he built for her a convent, in which she took the veil, that she might give herself wholly to Divine worship and the offices of a religious life. She possessed great personal charms, being accounted the flower of all these parts. The King of Leicester, whose name was Alger, and who was said to be a sprightly prince, asked her hand in marriage, and when his suit was rejected, went out with a great following, intent on destroying the city with fire and sword. The Princess, being much frightened, fled into Brampton Woods, to escape the vengeance of her importunate lover. He, pursuing her into this great forest retreat, was smitten with blindness. Then the Princess returned to the city, where she lived for many years in great peace, no foe ever after daring to approach the place. From that day to this, Oxford has preserved her privileges against the assaults of all enemies. St. Fridesyde—the Princess—died and was buried in her own convent, some fragments of which remain in the chapel of Christ Church Cathedral. Oxford, incidentally, therefore, grew up about a shrine. In the twelfth century here were to be found the beginnings of the University.”

“Oh, how very interesting, my Lord,” she said, with a gentle sigh at the conclusion. “I thank you much.”

“My Lady, shall I go on and tell you something of the present city, where your cousin now resides; the same where I spent some of my happiest years?”

“Please do, my Lord. How kind of you! I am deeply interested.”

“Approaching the city a few days ago, from a distant eminence I looked down upon the great University—its towers, its spires and ivy-grown walls, situate in the loveliest gardens in the world. How my heart thrilled with delight as my ears caught the

sound of the bells, pealing across the city in an almost continuous wave; and bounded tumultuously, as I entered through the gateway under the great tower, opening into the main quadrangle. I soon found myself within the sweet seclusion of the gardens in Oxford, which were at this time a mass of richest foliage and flowers. Ah, well do I love her walks, overhung with stately trees, her lawns of richest verdure; and the river, to whose banks often I had, in my school days, withdrawn to find a quiet spot in which I might pursue my studies."

"Oh, my Lord, and this lovely spot, where you pursued your studies—withdrawing to the quiet river, and studying under the influence of the gentle murmurings of its peaceful waters—is the same where Edwin now is—where he now studies?"

"Yes, my Lady—during the summer or Easter term," he said, gazing into her beautiful eyes, full of inquiry. "And from this garden may be seen the remains of the old Norman castle, whose tower still stands as a monument or as a lone sentinel guarding the ruins—the tower of St. Michael's Church, and many ancient buildings, rich with the tracery of the Middle Ages; as well as the remains of the old Roman wall, which once enclosed the whole city; and a bit of the wall of St. Fridesyde's ancient church."

"And, my Lord, was the severe old provost a devotee to the rod—did he flog alike the innocent and guilty, with indiscriminating delight?"

"Be assured, my Lady."

"And was it ever your fate, my Lord, to fall into his indiscriminating hands?" she asked archly.

"Never, I assure you. I somehow managed always to escape the fearful rod," he answered softly, looking into her bewildering eyes.

"'Twas your gentle demeanor, no doubt, saved you."

"I know not, my gentle cousin, whether my escape could be attributed to my gentle demeanor—possibly 'twas finesse."

"Finesse, my Lord? No! You would never resort to artifice for a shield."

"Thank you. And we were always called to dinner by two choirboys shouting this unacademic invitation: '*Tempus est vocandi a-manger, O Seigneurs!*' in a prolonged drawl, and they developed great skill in prolonging the syllables, that the sentence might last until we should all reach the eating kitchen."

"Oh, how funny! My Lord, you give a glowing description of my cousin's surroundings. I am glad to know that his *locale* is so pleasant, and appreciate your great kindness in coming by to see him. Do you feel quite sure, my Lord, that he will be with us next summer?"

"I will give you my promise that he shall be with us, dear cousin, if my influence is worth anything. I am sure he is quite anxious to visit you, and will start, possibly soon after commemoration-day, which is an annual solemnity in honor of the benefactor of the University."

"Oh, my Lord, I thank you!" How her heart smote her bosom now, as she caught the look of devotion he gave her, and she felt that she must not encourage him to love her. She must be more dignified and distant.

"And now," he said, "your Ladyship will tell me of yourself after I left. How were you pleased with your visitors, Lord and Lady de Bruce and the young ladies?" Kathryn's face flushed scarlet. He was looking intently at her, as vividly the scene of his departure came up before her mind, and she said, a little unevenly:

"My Lord, we just love them all; they are delightful people. Then mother wrote you of our visit to

Carlisle. Yes, nothing would do but we must accompany them home, and remain for a fortnight. I do assure you we had a most delightful visit; met again the Earl and Countess of Carlisle. They took us out to one of their country seats for a few days, and gave a great house-warming while there, which was attended by all the gentry of the neighborhood. The dear countess is more lovely on closer acquaintance than I had thought her. Then she, after returning to Carlisle, gave a grand costume ball, which was well attended. She played the rôle of Iris, a golden-winged goddess, in a long flowing tunic with the brightness of the rainbow, carrying a herald's staff and a pitcher. Her office was that of a youthful messenger bearing messages to King Olympus, who was represented by the Earl of Carlisle. Annie figured as a gypsy queen, and told everybody's fortune."

"And whom did you represent, my Lady," he asked.

"I? Oh, I appeared as a Greek nymph, in sylvan dress of pale green silk—my silver lute, with which I accompanied my voice, was carried by a little page who followed me everywhere, and on every turn I sang for those who asked me some simple love ditty, of which I possess a store. Oh, I do assure you we spent a lovely evening. And, my Lord——" He was gazing rapturously on her flushed face. "I met such a charming young man—the Countess presented him at the very first, and we were thrown together the entire evening, both representing the same nationality. He appeared as a celebrated Greek bard—Simonides—and sang for me the loveliest sonnets of some heart-melting——" She paused, confused by his reproachful look.

"My Lady, did the sweet sonnets of your Simonides melt your gentle heart to tears, as he is famed to have melted others in ages past?"

"My Lord, I cannot say that they did not."

"'Tis said of the ancient Simonides that he had the power, not only to sadden the mirth of the gay and thoughtless, but to melt to tears the stern and cold-hearted."

"My Lord, he sang with great pathos of heroic achievements of brave men, and with much tenderness he sang some love songs from the Greek——"

"For your ears alone, no doubt!"

"Yes, for me; and we sang together, our voices mingling in sweet accord, some sweet strains such, my Lord, as had your tuneful ear but caught, entranced, you would have paused to listen."

"I doubt it not, my Lady; but who was he who could so well represent the Simonides of other days?"

"My Lord, a Mr. de Vere—a most charming man."

"Ah, my friend Virgil de Vere, prospective heir of Bellingham, whose pedigree is unrivaled in antiquity and splendor."

"You know him, my Lord?"

"Know him! Aye, I know him well—a cousin of Lord Hawdon's."

"My Lord, is not he a nice Simonides?"

"I have never seen him in that rôle, but he is altogether a nice gentleman. We spent four years in Oxford together."

"When I spoke of you, my Lord, he said that he knew you."

"You spoke of me, then? Oh, Kate, dare I hope that you even thought of me, in the midst of all your enjoyment?" he asked eagerly.

"He asked about you, my Lord."

"Oh, he asked about me! What did you tell him of me, sweet cousin? He has been absent; it is long since I saw him."

"Oh, I told him that you were a good kind of a cousin," she said, coquettishly, and smiling sweetly, thinking she would awaken within him a little jeal-

ousy; then continued: "The good Countess seems to look upon him as a special friend."

"He is a particular friend of the family, I believe."

"Where does he live, my Lord?"

"He travels much—often in foreign countries, as attaché in the suite of the Ambassador, as member of Legation. When at home he resides at Cat-Head-Castle, with his mother, who is a sister of our friend Doctor Godkins. She is a widow lady of fine family, in moderate circumstances, though descended from a family of immense wealth. She owns an estate only five miles south of Carlisle, on the River Eden. There she resides in the old de Vere castle, called Cat-Head, on account of a spur of high points rising some distance back of the castle, having, from some points of view, the appearance of Sphinxes, or the heads of some huge, wild animal, and when at home he resides here with his mother and sister."

"Oh, my Lord, has this charming man a sister?"

"Indeed he has, and she is no less charming, in my eyes, than he."

"And he is dear old Doctor Godkins's nephew? Who else did you mention?"

"Lord Hawdon."

"I have not met him, my Lord?"

"No, I think not. He spends most of his time in London, where he has a widowed sister, Baroness Brundridge. They keep up a sumptuous residence there, but sometimes spend a summer near here, at his country seat, Hawdon Manor, not far from Cat-Head-Castle. Hawdon and de Vere are doubly related—their mothers were sisters, their fathers cousins in some degree."

"Is Lord Hawdon so nice, then, as my Simonides, Mr. de Vere?"

"I cannot say, but must leave you to be judge of

that when you meet Lord Hawdon. De Vere's engaging manners and beauty of person make him a favorite wherever he goes, and though he is not a titled gentleman, he is descended from a most ancient family. It was said of Audry de Vere, twentieth, and last, of the Earls of Oxford, that he was not only the noblest subject in England, but the noblest subject in all Europe. He derived his title from an uninterrupted male descendant from a time when the families of Howard and Seymour were still obscure—when the Nevils and Percies enjoyed only a provincial celebrity. One of the de Vere's held high command as far back as the Battle of Hastings; another marched with Godfrey and Tancred to the Holy Land; and on down the line they were all great men, but from beginning to end there are found none more noble than my friend Virgil de Vere."

"My Lord, you said he is prospective heir to the Earldom of Bellingham?"

"Yes, my cousin, the present Earl of Bellingham is a very old gentleman. He had two brothers. The elder of the two died, leaving only one son, who was Lord Hawdon, father of the present Lord Hawdon, who is actual heir to the earldom of Bellingham. The other left a daughter, who married Audry de Vere, Virgil's grandfather, and there are no other heirs to Bellingham. And, my Lady, you like Virgil?"

"Oh, my Lord, I do!"

"I approve your good taste. He is one of the finest gentlemen and scholars of the times. His temper is singularly sweet, impulses generous, his manner gracious and easy. It is impossible not to love him, and, though possessed of no great wealth, the poor all over the country have reason to bless his name. He is esteemed and caressed everywhere, and, like the Indian Apollo, is the idol of women's hearts."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HUNTING PARTY.

"Sweet are the paths, O passing sweet;
By Esk's pure stream that run,
O'er airy steep, through copse-wood deep,
Impervious to the sun."

Now approaches the morn set apart for the great hunt. From the courtyard, at the first cockcrow, Louis sounds the reveille. He was out moving everything for an early start.

In the castle lights were gleaming to and fro at the latticed windows, showing the inmates were up and preparing for the two days' journey that would take them to Weirwolf Chase.

"Ambrose, is my Lord about ready for the start?" asked Louis.

"Aye, Mr. Kearney! Aye, sir! Hi think 'e is habout ready," answered the sturdy Ambrose, who was bestowing on the great road wagon some portion of his master's luggage. "Hi think, Master Louis, you hare in great 'aste this morning to get off; you'r hearly, sir; hearly!"

"Forsooth! Daylight will be streaming over the mountains ere we leave the castle gate, man, I tell you! Look you, sir! See; 'yon grey lines that fret the clouds are messengers of day!" And, raising his tasseled hunting-horn to his lips, Louis gave a shrill blast.

"Now the merry huntsmen quit the bower," and hurry forth with clang and clatter. Amid the deafening uproar of the yelping hounds, for there were greyhounds, staghounds, foxhounds from the celebrated Arundel pack, Harriers and Beagles; and, amid the clamor of the merry huntsmen, the Earl made his appearance, in a magnificent hunting-suit, which well graced his perfect form, well equipped for the chase.

After seeing the ladies comfortable in the old royal coach—a marvel of luxury, richly gilded, with painted panels, drawn by six magnificent horses, he mounted, and was soon surrounded by twenty of his followers, and rode forth at the head of the procession. As they filed through the great castle gates, his bugle rang out loud and clear on the morning breeze. By his side rode Lord Phantomfell, in laced buff coat, his long slender legs incased in broad-topped hunting-boots, mounted on a hunter of good qualities, of the halfbreed sort, used in those days. Twenty men filed after, in blue hunting coats, bearing on the left breast the cognizance of Fleetwood; following, came the old royal coach, with six mounted attendants, besides the pages, who rode close on each side of the coach, while shouting, merry men thronged behind. These were followed by heavy road wagons loaded with comforts, for they carried with them many luxuries—soft bedding, fine tapestry, rich plate and hampers of finest wares—then came many attendants—maids and men-servants, mounted on horseback.

Louis, as marshal, dashed up and down the line, to see that all was in order. Thus the magnificent equipage poured from the castle gates on the main road leading to Carlisle, at which place they were to be joined by Lord and Lady de Bruce and their nieces, with their attendants, making in all a huge concourse.

At night they encamped on the banks of the river, not far from the mouth of Esk, and were rewarded for stopping there by the grandeur of the scenery. The shades of evening came slowly down and wrapped the woods in a glimmering light. Cheviot peak, rising in the distance, two thousand feet above the sea; the mountains blaze, tinged with the last lingering rays of sunbeams; the scene is illuminated with a crimson

glow, for, as the sun is sinking in splendor away, from the dazzling horizon bursts a brilliant flood of light over valley, river and hill. And more than this; they had the pleasure of witnessing a salmon hunt—an animating scene, unfamiliar to the most of the party.

Some men of the vicinity had gathered in about dusk, each carrying a long spear or trident, to hunt salmon on horseback. The Earl and several of his men were courteously invited to join in this great sport. The men dashed in at full gallop, chasing the fishes in the shallow water and striking them with the barbed spear, which they called a “waster.” Many attendants along the banks carried blazing torches, which threw a light upon the water, running along and brandishing them wildly. The scene was one of rare animation. The men in their successes were greeted with clamorous applause, the merry shouts ringing out over the river. The riders were good horsemen, but it required quick movements to capture the fish in their own element. Great numbers of salmon were thus caught, and by the generosity of the spearsmen our campers were well supplied with fish for their breakfast. The ladies stood on an eminence, at a little distance, where the Earl had considerably placed them, that they might view the sport, the bright light from the torches throwing a red glare on the romantic scene.

Next day, after a delightful ride up the river, they arrived at the old Saxon tower in Weirwolf chase, in early evening, giving plenty of time for the arrangement of all things for the comfort of the ladies. The great old stone tower overhanging the river, almost covered with creeping shrubs, was a thing of beauty—surrounded by immense trees, huge remnants of the Caledonian Forest, which once extended through the southern portion of Scotland, from east to west. The

Tower and environments lay in the extensive domains of the barony of Weirwolf. Grazing along the river were to be seen many of the breed of Scottish cattle, described by ancient writers as beautiful in appearance, being milk white, with black muzzles, horns and hoofs, and having flowing white manes.



CHAPTER XX.

THE HUNT.

"Oh merry it was in the gay green-wood,
Where the goblin and sprite range free:
Where the kelpie haunted the shadows and flood,
And the dryad dwelt in the tree."

Now Louis was heard, singing out in the early morning air: "'Awake, awake! Night's candles are burned out, and jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountain's top' Be up and ready to mount! Huntsmen, awake! Busk ye, boune ye for the chase." And now his sweet-toned bugle rings out, awakening every sleeper.

The ladies, whose sleeping apartments had been arranged in the pavilion, hung with drapery, were served breakfast, with Lord de Bruce and the Earl, in a beautiful bower adjoining, made for the purpose.

Breakfast was dainty enough to suit their epicurean tastes, composed of fine broiled fish, fresh from the adjacent stream, with all manner of small game, which had been bagged on the way the day before and carefully dressed for the morning meal. They had white loaf bread as well as bannocks, and also the Scottish gingie cake. The coffee and tea were pronounced fine, for had they not good Mrs. Macleod along to see to all this. And when Andrew Bangs, the butler,

brought forth some bottles of delicate red and white wines of Napoli di Malvasia, the sort that will "cheer but not inebriate," their breakfast was complete—to which their appetites, whetted by two days' travel, did ample justice. Yet to most of them the surroundings were so novel and lovely, they were scarce able to hold their minds on the delicious food before them.

'Tis now daylight, and from night's dark dungeon the sun has begun to mount the horizon, sending his rays of glory through the dusky earth, causing the straggling clouds to flee. Now some far-off halloo breaks on the silent air, and up dash, with clang and clatter, a company of twenty young men of the best families of the Earl's retainers at Weirwolf, who had been invited to join the party at the old hunting tower, under the leadership of Hector McNeil. They were fine-looking Scots, and wore short breeches, tartan hose and low shoes; with jerkins of plaid, a plaid about their shoulders, blue caps, "a handkerchief knit with two knots about their necks," and were well armed for the hunt—with hangers, muskets, dirks, and some carried the old-time lochaber axe—each wearing on his breast, in fine embroidery, the skulking weirwolf.

Captain McNeil was a stout, broad-shouldered Scot, with soft brown hair and eyes, dressed pretty much as his men, his plaid gracefully adjusted about his person, the ends flowing from a brooch fastened on the left shoulder. He carried a straight blade, attached to a baldric; a dirk on his right side. All wore the inevitable spleuchen, covered with fur. They were received with much cordiality by the Earl and his men.

Now a magnificent cortege rode forth from the hunting tower. The ladies, wearing black silk riding-masks for the protection of their complexion—a usage

common in those days, the Earl taking the lead, with Miss Bruneau by his side; the others followed on in this fashion: Annie and Guy, Louis and Rosa, Kathryn and Rorey, Lord Phantomfell and Flora—all mounted on good halfbreeds of great strength and endurance.

Lord de Bruce and Julien kept pace with Lady de Bruce and Lady Hawren, who were mounted on gentle and easy-going palfreys splendidly comparisoned. The impatient horses, partaking of the spirit of the chase, pranced, curveted and snorted; then, at a signal from the Earl's bugle, away they dash!

Louis and Rosa now appeared as most intimate friends. Lord Beenville, who on that Christmas night, near a year ago, instead of sleeping, had heard all that Louis, in a little heat of temper and somewhat under the influence of wine, said of Rosa on that occasion; and lost no time next morning in repeating it to her, possibly adding much more, on which Rosa was indignant and pouted for awhile, but as Louis was leaving with His Lordship of Fleetwood she assumed a kindly spirit and bade him good-bye, comforting herself with this thought: "Never mind! I will be even with him yet for those uncalled-for remarks, and in order to do so, must appear quite friendly with him."

As for Louis, he had readily forgotten all he held against her—his disappointment under the mistletoe, the stinging slap she had administered him for his impudence. And the more he saw of her the more he admired her pretty little ways. Her vivacity was charming. He saw, too, that with all her wild freaks and hoydenish style, she had proper reserve, never transcending the bounds of good breeding. He had admitted to Guy that he was smitten with the witching creature; and now, being once more thrown into her

pleasant company, he was delighted to be permitted to ride beside her in the chase.

Sportsmen, suitably dressed, followed them. Then dashed out the foresters, and rangers in buckskin breeches, the pack of yelping hounds and dogs of all sorts, held in leash by the many attendants, some on foot, others mounted.

They were to hunt to-day in Eskdale and Liddesdale muirs, south from the old tower. How they enjoyed the wild dash over the muir and into the forest! The leaders were not long in finding signs of the game. Presently there was a lively flourish of the French horn. A ranger approached the Earl, full tilt, saying:

"My Lord, a deer has been lodged!" They hasten forward and station themselves along the cover, awaiting, while the keeper and rangers enter with the bantdog. The impatient staghounds rave and strain against the leash; now a stag is unharbored and dashes forth; the dogs are loosed and dash madly away after the quarry. How they rave! Now all rush away, pellmell, and with whoop and yell they awake the forest. But after an exciting race the wiley quarry eludes his pursuers, and escapes into an extensive thicket; horsemen dash up from every quarter and rangers were sent in to dislodge him, which was soon done, and away they dash again, with hurrah! and tally-ho! turning this way and that, in an exciting chase covering many miles.

There was much hallooing, blowing of horns, clattering of hoofs, and screaming, with the yelping of the hounds making a deafening uproar, while the quarry made desperate efforts to escape from his tormentors, when, after vainly trying to elude the dogs, he found his strength gone and the hounds upon him. At his wits' end, he turned bravely upon his persecutors, who paused in their hot pursuit. A blast from

Louis' horn announced the stag at bay. A number of horsemen were now upon him. The infuriated beast dashed madly at his assailants, when Louis, who was first to the game, drew a holster and sent a ball into its side. Hector McNeil dashed up behind, and ere it could change its position dextrously brought it to the ground with his long hunting sword. Now the Earl arrives upon the scene, accompanied by Lady Kathryn and Rosa. The pack rushed in, and, seizing their prey, soon put an end to the struggles of their victim. Then came in stragglers from all quarters; the dogs were called off. The huntsmen sounded the mort, waved their hats, and set up a general shout. Others gathered in to see the stag; and, when the treble mort was sounded, a general whoop resounded over the muir, mingling with the yelling of the hounds, causing a terrific uproar.

Now Louis approached; and, dropping on his knees, offered the Earl the knife for the purpose of making the first incision in the breast of the stag to "say the deer"—to discover the quality of the venison, which courtesy His Lordship declined, saying:

"You may offer this sylvan compliment to some other, Louis; to one of the fair ones."

Louis now turned to Lady Kathryn, and would have extended the compliment to her, but she grew pale; and, trembling with manifest aversion, drew back. The Earl, observing this, motioned him away, saying:

"No, no, Louis; some other, someone more stout-hearted!"

Turning, he saw Hector offering his knife to Rosa. She quickly dismounted without assistance, and, seizing the knife, rushed up to the stag and, hastily making an incision, sprang back, with a ringing laugh:

"Ha, ha, ha! Only see, My Lord," she said gaily, "there's three fingers o' fat i' the brisket!" Hector

looked on, charmed beyond measure with the little hoyden, who for the first time he had seen.

"Good for you, Miss Rosa!" cried Louis. "Bravely done!"

"Aha, Mr. Kearney," she said; "you left me struggling in the brush and dashed off in the chase! You'll know it when I go hunting with you again, sir!" She stood beside her horse, Louis and Hector both standing near.

"I do most humbly beg your pardon, Miss Rosa; it being the first time I ever accompanied a young lady in the chase, that—I own I forgot you."

"Oh, worse and worse—thus to be forgotten!" she returned.

"I do assure you I will make it all up by future diligence." Then he introduced Hector: "Miss Rosa Bruneau, Captain McNeil."

Hector doffed his cap with a gracious bow. Now Guy and Annie came up.

"Ah, Miss Annie," said Louis, "I certainly expected better of you than that you should lose all the sport, getting in only in time to see the dead stag. I had expected you to be more prompt on the scene of action."

"We had expected to be here in ample time to see him defy and, perhaps, whip out the dogs; but when the halloo began this headstrong barb of mine took the bits between his teeth and started with me, *nolens volens*; away he went, after the hounds, into cover and out again; and over the moor, carrying me whithersoever he would; and paid no more attention to the rein than if I had none. And it was all Mr. Brignol could do, who had followed in the wake to pick me up if I should fall, to come alongside, which he finally did, and seized him by the bit with a heavy hand and set him back on his haunches so suddenly as to send me rolling over his head."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Ho, ho, ho!" "He, he, he!" they roared.

"Then, I assure you," continued Annie, "I was glad enough to rest a little. After we heard the mort sounded we thought we would come and see who had had the temerity to advance upon the foe, to slay him."

"'Twas I, Miss Hamilton, who did kill him with my little pistol!" cried Louis, proudly swinging his holster. "I must own, however, Miss Hamilton, that Captain McNeil here, whom I take pleasure in introducing to you—allow me: Captain McNeil, Miss Hamilton—gave him the death stroke with his long sword, thus robbing me of all the glory."

"My Lord," now asked Rosa, "what have you done with my sister, Augusta? I see her nowhere."

"True!" cried the Earl, being recalled to his senses. He had been sitting there in pleasant conversation with Kathryn, forgetful of the existence of Miss Bruneau, with whom he had set out on the chase. "In the excitement of the chase I missed Miss Augusta; and, dashing about in search of her, I found Lady Kathryn; then yourself, Rosa, who had each lost your attendants. Guy! Louis! Have none of you seen Miss Bruneau? We must find her."

Hector assisted Rosa to her saddle; Louis, seeing she was already mounted, sprang to his saddle, and, wheeling his horse beside her, said: "Aye, aye, Miss Rosa; I must make amends for past negligence by future diligence!"

"I pray you, Mr. Louis, give yourself no further trouble; Captain McNeil will accompany me." And, bowing low to him, she reined up beside Hector, to his great delight. Louis turned off with a rueful countenance. Has any one seen aught of Flora and Laura Phantomfell?" asked the Earl. No one had seen them.

"Now," said he, "let us hasten to find the missing

ones. My Lord Phantomfell is possibly with the ladies and will allow them to suffer no harm. We may find them at the rendezvous for the noonday meal." He consulted his splendid gold repeater; then, with a flourish of his bugle, all were notified of the approach of the hour of noon.

They rode forth, and as they approached the spot appointed for the rendezvous, some distance away, they could descry two figures seated on a little mound, with two caparisoned steeds feeding on the green herbage near. The two figures, on nearer approach, proved to be no other than Miss Augusta and Lord Phantomfell.

Miss Bruneauh was gesticulating wildly, while Lord Phantomfell appeared to be exerting himself to quiet her perturbed spirits. As they drew near, they heard him say:

"Aw, my deah Miss Augustah, shuely no one has had the temewity to attempt to abduct you! It must be altogetther a chimewa of the bwain; foh no one would daeh to touch you—I would shoot him on the spot!"

Now the others ride up, and, dismounting, approach the excited pair.

"My dear Miss Bruneauh," said the Earl, "I am glad to find you here in safety. I could not imagine what had become of you."

"No!" she exclaimed excitedly, as she rose and confronted him. "It appears that no one knew or *cared* where I was or what had become of me; nor what my fate might be!" waving her hands frantically. "Here I have been carried away by a lot of brigands; absolutely abducted under your very eyes, and no one caring a fig to rescue me!" Her reproachful glance rested on the Earl, as she continued: "And, had it not been for the kindness of a noble, great-hearted man, who came up and demanded my release—yes, came to my

rescue, heavily armed with sword and pistol—demanded my release; if it had not been for this man's magnanimity, his greatness of heart, not one of you would have seen me ever again!" And Miss Augusta, overcome with emotion, buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Rosa ran to her sister and clasped her in her arms; then Kathryn and Annie also came to offer consolation to their friend. The Earl drew near, saying anxiously: "My dear Miss Bruneau, pray explain; surely no one in my employ would dare offend you, or offer you an indignity. This is a private hunting party, on my own grounds, and all the men here are in my employ; none other is allowed to enter. You have but to mention the name of any who would dare offer you an indignity, and he shall be punished as he richly deserves." And, turning to Lord Phantomfell, he continued: "And, my Lord, I am most grateful to you, I do assure you, for your promptness in rendering assistance to the young lady, our friend, Miss Bruneau. Possibly you can name the offender."

"Aw, my Lawd; you laboh under a mistake, I asuwah you! It was not I who was happily near to wender assistance to the deah young lady who we find in so much distwess. I only wish I had been; I would have shot the vile assailant on the spot—dam'me—on the spot!"

Now all settled themselves on the greensward, and Miss Augusta said, as she raised her tear-stained eyes to the Earl's troubled face:

"My Lord, I will explain, if I can, this fearful contretemps. It was all so sudden, and so nearly frightened me to death that I scarcely remember anything distinctly about it. When we started on the chase, amid the wild halloo, the dashing of horses, ringing of horns, and the yelping of the dogs, there was such an uproar that I did not know which way to turn.

You then dashed away and left me, my Lord, to my fate." She gave him a withering glance. "I knew I could never keep pace with you; so I drew out into an open space near the edge of the forest, thinking to rest me a while and watch the huntsmen dashing shadowlike among the trees. I was startled by the appearance of a man, a long and gorgeous capa draped about his slender figure in graceful folds—think of it, a cloak at this season!—who dashed up beside me on my left, turning my horse into a cattle path on my right. On reaching the cover of the wood, he seized my bridle and dashed off with me. I was so terrified that I nearly swooned from my saddle; but he held me with one hand, saying in foreign accent: 'Keep your seat, lady; keep your seat. I will take you to your friend.' Then he blew a little whistle. But we had not gone far when my noble deliverer made his appearance. I appealed to him, saying: 'Save me; oh, save me! I pray, for the love of Heaven, save me!' In my excitement my mask was displaced, my hat fell off, my hair rippled down on my shoulders, as you now see it," she said, shaking out her locks of paley-gold over her riding basque. "The moment he beheld my face he rode up beside me in a most cavalier-like manner, and spoke to the man who held my bridle, saying, in a low tone of voice: 'What a mistake, Antonio!' Then, speaking out clearly, he said: 'This is a terrible mistake!' And demanded: 'Let go that bridle, sir!' The other muttered: 'Meestak? Diable, Signor!' Then the large man—my deliverer—said sternly: 'Would you dare apprehend a lady in these grounds?' The other, dropping the bridle, rode off to one side, the long-fringed ends of a crimson sash showing beneath his riding cloak. The other then said in the most gentle manner, as he restored to me my bridle, my hat, and my mask: 'Now, lady, you will turn your horse and ride back the way you came to your

friends. I will see that you come to no harm.' And as I was pouring out to my deliverer my heartfelt thanks I heard the other say: 'Diable, it is hot!' And, glancing back, as I turned to ride away, I saw him throw off the long capa, and he was neatly dressed in black velvet, with a crimson sash around his waist."

"Louis," said the Earl, "have you seen any one so dressed in the chase?"

"No, my Lord; I have not."

"And, my Lord," continued Miss Augusta, "he had on a tall hat, going up in a point."

"How looked the other man, Miss Bruneau?" asked Louis.

"Oh, well enough looked my deliverer!" returned she. "He is a large, heavy man, with black whiskers, wearing buff coat and leather breeches."

"Allow me to assist you, Miss Bruneau," said the Earl, as they now rose to go; "you are doubtless feeling a little weak and nervous from your fright." She rose, and leaned heavily on his arm as they walked slowly on toward the spot which had been designated for the noon meal on the greensward. She paused now and again, as though almost overcome. They could now see the smoke from the wood fires, curling through the trees, the steam from the boiling kettles, and hear the clangor of preparation, and the hum of many voices in converse and laughter, as the busy cooks prepared the savory meal.

In a lovely grove near by they found Lord and Lady de Bruce, Lady Hawren and Flora, already here awaiting them, with Rorey and Julien, who had soon tired of the unaccustomed sport, and were lounging under the drooping branches of a great tree.

The Earl, disposing of Miss Bruneau, drew Louis and Guy aside, and had a long talk with them relative to the story Miss Bruneau had told, speculating as

to what could have been the meaning of the attempted abduction of the young lady.

"Louis," said the Earl, "keep a sharp vigil for any one suiting in any way the descriptions given by Miss Bruneau, and arrest him on sight. Pick four of your best men and bid Hector select an equal number of his, and keep them on the alert for those villains."

Then he went to accompany the ladies to dinner. Louis and Guy stood talking yet a while.

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Louis.

"What! Not believe what the young lady said?" exclaimed Guy.

"Oh, she was doubtless excited; they may have been some of those raw Scots—some of Hector's men—that she ran into, and the rest was all imagined."

"But, Louis, the young, dark-looking one in black velvet and red sash?"

"All imagination! Some Scot in his plaid, no doubt," insisted Louis.

"You know, Louis, we are not far from the notorious old Hermitage Castle in Teviotdale, which has long been the resort of malignant demons, it is said; and I have more than once noticed in my Lord Graeme's retinue a tall, slender, dark, Italian-looking lad; sometimes in black velvet."

"Out upon you, Guy! Do not *you*, also, let imagination transport you, as it has Miss Augusta. Does not Shakespeare say:

"'Imagination bodies forth the forms of things unseen,
And gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.'"

"Why, Louis, think you Miss Augusta would have said that she has, had there been nothing of this?"

"Tut, tut, Guy! I perceive you are too credulous; altogether so. She evidently did not like it because His Lordship left her in the chase and came up with

Lady Kathryn. She, maybe, thought to upbraid him for his neglect, and also awaken his sympathies, which might lead to love, such as she has already awakened in the breast of His Lordship of Phantomfell, whom we but now saw raving up and down, like an *amé damme* from the River Styx, declaring vengeance against the imaginary brigand, vowing to shoot him on first sight."

"Ah, Louis, you are hard on the young lady——"

"Young! If I were tempted to steal a lady at all she would be a *young* lady, and a pretty one. I do not much wonder that they released her on the dropping of her mask."

"And if it were the other, eh, Louis, 'twould be different, would it not?"

"I should say! If I were going to elope with one it would be the charming little witch who——"

"Come, Louis; break off! No more of that! And you get off on the subject of the little Amazon or we will get no dinner to-day. Come, let us to it e'en now. The odor from the broiling venison is something delicious and gives me an appetite."

"I do admit, Guy, the aroma from the fine coffee and the spiced viands of various kinds does allure the taste."

"The odor is indeed soothing to the olfactory nerves, and a morsel at this juncture would be just as grateful to my palate."

"*Nous allons, donc*, as the 'Count' would say! Let us go, then."

Walking back to the grove, they passed the place where the cooking was still in operation. Alongside of a bank was a fire with pots boiling, spits turning, and a great variety of food was being served up. When they reached the improvised table they found the others already in the enjoyment of the delicious viands. Miss Augusta had apparently regained her

equanimity, and seemed to have forgiven the Earl for his momentary neglect; for now she was receiving his polite attentions in a most amiable mood, her face wreathed with gracious smiles.

After dinner they again dashed off into the chase; and, when the afternoon was spent in lively pursuit of game, returned to the tower, with little or no adventure. On the following day they were up early, for Louis usually sang them a hunts-up, arousing all to activity by the first streaks of day. The sport was conducted on the east side of the tower with much success. But approaching night soon dropped her curtain over all.



CHAPTER XXI.

MOONLIGHT AT OLD TOWER.

"The rising of the moon, calm, slow,
And beautiful, as if she came
Fresh from the Elysian bowers below,
Was with a loud and sweet acclaim
Welcomed from every breezy height,
Where crowds stood waiting for her light."

AFTER laying aside their hunting costumes and laying their faces in soft and cooling waters from the fountain, the ladies don their soft, filmy demi-toilettes; and, while gentle twilight throws a hazy mantle over all, are led forth to a delicious dinner awaiting them in the charming cool dining bower. Not long, however, did the joyous young people linger at this epicurean feast; for soon they were walking to and fro beneath the knotted and gnarled oaks, which still retained some signs of the reverence paid them by the ancient Druids, who ages before had worshipped beneath their spreading bows.

The Earl had sought Kathryn and led her to a green, mossy bank, where they sat beside a wimpling streamlet. And this is the first moment they have had alone since leaving the castle; there has been such a throng always—so many around—they had not had a moment of private talk; and since his return he had not spoken to her of love. And now their young hearts sigh, as if this scene of love and beauty were oppressive. “Dear cousin,” he said, “have you enjoyed the chase to-day?”

“Very much, I thank you, my Lord,” she returned, with some dignity.

“This has been a happy day for me, also; for nothing affords me more happiness than to see others happy.”

“My Lord, you have made all things so enjoyable for us, how could we but be happy!” she said, with a deep sigh. He studied her sweet face a moment, then asked:

“Do we sigh when our hearts are buoyant with happiness?”

“My Lord, no; I do not say that I am now happy,” she said sadly.

“If it were in my power, cousin, I would make you happy always.”

“Thank you, cousin—my Lord. You have already rendered me much happiness.”

“My happiness results from making others happy. I may never again realize such happiness as I have known—as that of which I have fondly dreamed. I believe it is not for mortals to realize perfect or continued happiness. I know not why such a deep sadness should thus, at this time, invade the citadel of my heart,” he said, with a long-drawn sigh. Then in silence they sat, listening to the murmurings of the little stream and the droaning of the cascade at a distance. Now they hear the tinkling of Flora’s lute;

then Annie's voice rose in sweetest song. The young people were seated, at a little distance, on a grassy knoll. Kathryn and the Earl listened to the words of a sweet, sad ditty, which e'en threw around their hearts a deeper sadness. Then Louis sang, Flora accompanying his manly voice with her lute:

"Woodmen, shepherds, come away,
This is Pan's great holiday;
Throw off cares, with your heaven-aspiring airs,
Help us to sing,
While valleys with your echoes ring.
Nymphs that dwell within these groves,
Leave your arbours, bring your loves,
Gather posies, crown your golden hair with roses;
As you pass.
Foot-like fairies on the grass."

The melody ceased. Lady Kathryn asked:

"My Lord, is not to-morrow our last day here?"

"Yes, my cousin; one more day in the chase, then I shall take you to Weirwolf Castle for a week or more."

"I shall be delighted. I am anxious to see Weirwolf."

"Will Your Ladyship permit me to accompany you in the chase to-morrow?"

"Certainly, my cousin, if you wish it," she said demurely.

"How I have longed to be with you each day—all the time! But courtesy to my invited guests has demanded my attention to them."

"Oh, yes, my cousin; I know—I appreciate the situation," she said, smiling sadly. The notes of the little Amazon's flute floated out softly on the air. The moon became shrouded in a long line of black clouds. A screech owl, from a clump of hawthorn near, sent forth his dismal cry, "then from the thicket broke, and

fluttered down the dell." Afar off, from a furzy fen, arose the lonely bark of a solitary fox.

The Earl, gazing sadly on the dark cloud, said:

"The sable cloud that floats just above the horizon has covered the moon, obscuring its brightness; now and then a little light flashes upon it, then as suddenly fades away, leaving all in darkness. 'Tis the emblem of my life—all gloomy, with now and again a gleam of hope to thrill my soul with bliss, but for a moment, then is gone, leaving my soul in deeper gloom, wrapped in night, turning its darkness on the world which it should lighten."

"My cousin, you are sad to-night; I have never before seen you gloomy. Have you never seen a sable cloud 'turn forth her silver lining on the night'? See! Only behold now your cloud, my Lord!"

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Even while I gaze, what a glorious light floods the dark cloud with a roseate hue! A heavenly light has transformed the cloud into a mountain of gold. Emblem of my life? I will take comfort, then. That blessed silver lining bids me hope! Love, thy fadeless ray will never be obscured! Linger thou within the depths of this heart; thou wilt triumph at last." He spoke as if in a reverie, the impassioned cadence falling soft and low upon her ear. The effulgent rays of light now beamed forth; for the moon, escaping from the dark cloud, poured upon them a flood of brilliancy. He scanned her fair face, now all aglow with color, and thought her a creature of consummate loveliness.

While thus the pensive lovers languish beside the wimpling waters, their long-drawn sighs breathing of love, the soothing moonlight softening their sorrows, Miss Augusta had betaken herself unto a rustic seat in the flecking shadow of a large oak, whence she, not unfrequently, threw her envious glances upon Lady Kathryn, at no great distance away. For the last few

days the Earl had shown her much courtesy, possibly wishing to atone for his apparent neglect on the first day in the chase, leaving her subjected to the great fright which she had undergone, and for which his kind heart still upbraided him continually; thus, to make amends, he had devoted himself more exclusively to her than he otherwise would have done.

Besides, since his return, Kathryn had seemed to shun him, and the past two days she had dashed away, with Louis and Rosa one day, and Julien and Rorey the next; he did not quite understand it all. "Why should she wish to shun him?"

When the group of young people, with merry jest and laughter, had disposed themselves upon the green-sward, Lord Phantomfell approached, and sat beside Miss Augusta on the rustic seat beneath the tree, but found her in no amiable mood.

Louis and Rosa talked, laughed and sang together; she played for him some merry little jigs on her flute. For two days he had been almost constantly in her company. She was very gracious, most sweet and encouraging in her manner toward him. He perceived not how she toyed with him and led him on, and knew not that she had set her heart on "getting even with him" for his inadvertent speech on Christmas night.

Hector McNeil sat apart, regarding her wistfully, observing her every look and movement. She filled his eye completely; never before had he seen any one so charming, one who possessed so many graces and gifts; her wild nature suited him exactly; her untamed and undaunted spirit was a good match for his own; and, when at his request she played, with charming *naïveté*, "Bonnie Dundee" and "Blue Bonnets Over the Border," his heart throbbed with tumultuous delight while he watched her little fingers, like dainty

butterflies, fluttering over the gold and ivory-decked flute. Until this evening, his timidity had not permitted him to approach or speak to her since that first day, when she had so promptly and bravely accepted the sylvan compliment he had offered her, and had chosen to ride with him instead of Louis.

Now how vain he finds his effort to conceal:

“The flame that in his bosom lies;
His cheek’s confusion tells the tale—
We read it in his languid eyes!
And while his words the heart betray,
His silence speaks even more than they.”

When the dews of night began to fall and sparkle on the herbage, they were admonished to go in.

The soothing influence of the glowing hour had softened the tumult of emotions surging in their breasts into a blissful sadness; and, when the Earl and Kathryn rose to join the others, he said:

“And to-morrow we will ride together all day?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will not go away again with Louis and Rosa, and leave me as you did the last two days?”

“No, my Lord,” she said, looking up bravely into his eyes; “we will mount and away together—you were not offended?”

“No, sweet cousin; yet I wished so much to be near you all the time.” At the main entrance of the ladies’ pavilion, on parting for the night, he pressed her hand and said softly:

“My love for you is a fadeless ray, which can never be obscured.”

Now all repaired for rest, and soon sank into sweet oblivion, after a day of wild chase and delightful merriment. Little reck they of what may betide them on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CONTRETEMPS.

"Wind the horn, my hunter boy,
 And leave the lute's inglorious sighs;
 Hunting is the hero's joy,
 'Till war his nobler game supplies.
 Hark, the hound-bells ringing sweet,
 While hunters shout and woods repeat,
 Hilli-ho! Hilli-ho!"

* * * * *

"Three times to-day you have defended me from imminent death."

* * * * *

THE glen was suffused "with a soft, red glow"; the stars were obscured by a flush of rosy splendor. Louis' bugle rang through the dingle and over the chase; then for a hunts-up he sang:

"Hark! hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,
 And Phoebus 'gins to rise,
 His steeds to water at those springs
 On chaliced flowers that lies;
 And winking mary-buds begin
 To ope their golden eyes;
 With everything that pretty bin;
 My lady sweet, arise;
 Arise, arise!"

All was now bustle and preparation for an early start. Lady Kathryn bounded forth in a lovely sylvan riding dress, and was soon mounted on her milk-white steed, in beautiful trappings of purple, blazoned with gold. The Earl, in a charming hunting suit of Lincoln-green, mounted his black hunter and reined up beside her. They smiled on each other, as if all their sadness and dark forebodings had been dispelled by a night of refreshing slumber. The Earl's bugle rang out sweetly, with a clear and lively flourish, on the crisp

morning air. He and Kathryn take the lead, Lord Phantomfell accompanying Miss Hamilton; Guy and Miss Bruneau, Flora and Rorey, Rosa and Julien follow. Louis, finding himself *de trop*, dashed off, singing merrily:

“For all our men were verry verry merry,
And all our men were drinking;
There were two men of mine, and three men of thine,
And three that belonged to Thom O’Lyne,
As they went to the ferry,
They were verry verry merry—’”

The sprightly hunters dash merrily away. After a glorious ride of four miles up the river, the Earl and Kathryn station themselves where they have a good view, beside a little streamlet, wimpling in and out among the hills, like threads of silver. The mists were now lifting, and dewdrops, like diamonds, glisten on the leaves and downs, and hang “a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.” Here and there were clumps of coppice and wild rose vines. How fresh and clear was the morning air! A lovely scene lay spread out before them: the morning sun flooding river, forest and fell with a beauty and grandeur seldom equaled; while in the east lay the Cheviots, bathed in a sea of azure.

Ambrose stood near them, with a leash of fine stag hounds straining impatiently to be let upon the game. Rangers were beating the thicket. The scene was so lovely Kathryn cried out with rapture:

“Oh, how lovely! My Lord, you have reserved the finest field for the last day; and how charming!” As she spoke a red deer bounded from the coppice near and scudded away over the plain.

“Slip leash, Ambrose, and let them go!” cried the Earl. As Ambrose slipped the dogs bounded forward. Ambrose, delighted, cried out: “Ow they spring haway has soon has leash his slipped! Honly see

them! Behold Cato now! 'E could heasy pull doon the best of deer! Ow true 'e his! Methinks there never flew ha 'ound more true nor fleet hof foot. Neither his Cæsar hand Tony far behind 'im. 'Ow they dash!"

Now there was a lively chorus, a mingling of shouts, cheering and halloos, with the impatient yelping of hounds, repeated bursts from the French horn for the encouragement and direction of the dogs; figures flitted among the trees and dashed with the speed of a whirlwind over the downs; confusion reigns supreme. In the midst of the ringing of bugles, the huntsmen's cries, the clang of hoofs and the baying of the loud-mouthed pack, there was suddenly the flourish of a horn, announcing a stag at bay. Huntsmen dash up with wild enthusiasm and determination. The stag turns furiously upon them.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" they yell.

"Onto him! Assail him! Assail him!" they cry.

"Go roundly onto him, men!"

But the huntsmen, with all this encouragement, stand aloof, fearing too near an approach to the now infuriated and dangerous foe; watching for an opportunity for striking him without coming in contact with his poisonous horns or hoofs; remembering the old woodsmen's rhyme: "If thou be hurt with horn or hoof, it brings thee to thy bier." Ashton Riggles, one of Hector's men, sprang dextrously from his horse, and, dashing suddenly onto him, brought him to the ground with a stroke of his stout hunting knife; the dogs throttle their victim, and soon end his struggles. Then rose a deafening clamor, whooping and blowing of horns. And while Lord de Bruce tested the quality of the venison, the Earl, who had kept well up with the hounds, turned to seek Lady Kathryn; and, discerning her white steed on a mound at a distance, he soon reached her side. He knew that she timidly

shrank from beholding the death struggle of the deer.

Now the bugle announced the time for the noon gathering, and they rode slowly on to the place where luncheon was served. After which the Earl stood with folded arms beneath an ancient oak, proudly viewing the happy scene; for the party, with careless ease, had disposed themselves upon the green in merry groups here and there. At a little distance away the happy attendants were enjoying a bountiful repast in much hilarity, with aquevite and usquebah.

"A 'wealth of elm and poplar shook o'er head;
Hardby, a sacred spring flowed gurgling on
From the Nymphs' grot, and in the somber boughs
The sweet cicada chirped laboriously.
Hid in the thick thorn-bushes far away
The tree frog's note was heard; the crested lark
Sang with the goldfinch; turtles made their moan;
And o'er the fountain hung the gilded bee."

Here and there against a knotted oak in idleness hang the huntsmen's arms. Guy stood beside His Lordship, talking:

"Aye, my Lord, you know we rode together in the chase to-day; and I was joking her some about Lord Phantomfell's assiduous attentions, when she said: 'I am done with Lord Phantomfell; and told him so last night!'"

"What!" exclaimed the Earl. "Refused Lord Phantomfell?"

"She said so; and further said: 'Mr. Brignol, my heart is set on one infinitely more superb and grand! I am looking higher yet than to Lord Phantomfell.' To whom, my Lord, do you sup——" Guy broke off suddenly, as Louis, who had just dashed up and dismounted, approached them, his face expressive of some important communication.

"What is it, Louis; why are you not with the ladies?" asked the Earl.

"Insomuch, Louis, as you have gotten to be quite a ladies' man of late," said Guy.

"Aye, Guy, I love the ladies surely; but—my Lord——"

"What has happened to so flurry you, Louis?" asked His Lordship.

"Methinks, my Lord, I have seen the men described by Miss Augusta!"

"Truly!"

"Aye, truly, my Lord. A short time ago, while dashing at breakneck speed after the game, in passing a clump of copsewood, I perceived two figures, intently gazing on the scene below; they were not of our party, and were just as described by Miss Bruneau. A heavysset man, heavily armed, wearing whiskers, and a slender youth in black velvet and red sash, with a light cloak flowing from his shoulders. As soon as possible I checked my speed, and, turning, dashed for the place; but found no one—they had disappeared."

"Think you, Louis, this is not all imagination?" queried Guy.

"There is no imagination in the case; I saw the two just as she has described them," returned Louis peremptorily.

"Well, Louis, take your picked men, and watch for them this afternoon. Station yourselves where you will observe them if they venture in again, and discover, if you can, why they are prying around. It may be that Gaston and some of his minions are prowling about."

"Aye, my Lord; I had thought of that. You know that the Old Hermitage lies in the distance across yon mountain. We can see the towers and spires of the old castle; and you know the reputation of its inhabitants," said Guy.

"Keep a good watch, Louis; be on your guard. We

will have just one more little dash with the hounds ere we return to the tower ; then on to-morrow we will set out for Weirwolf."

Mounting, they started off in an easterly direction, and were soon again in the midst of the chase. The woods ring with the wild halloos, as they follow the hounds through the gay greenwoods and dingles of Weirwolf chase. The startled quarry, darting hither and yonder, seeking cover, then starting again ; the gallant greyhounds straining after. The Earl, yielding for a moment to the wild fascination, follows in pursuit ; then, missing Lady Kathryn from his side, stops short ; but, recognizing her green habit and snowy plumes in the distance, he turns his horse about. She had checked up, and sat her horse in a clearing on a slight eminence, where she could have a good view of the chase without following, as she was a little tired ; and, wishing not to behold the death of the poor victim, would await here the return of the Earl. She listened to the flourish of the horns, the cheering of the men in the forest, and to the deep baying of the hounds ; then fell into a brown study, from which she was suddenly awakened by the rustling of the bushes near by, and a chasseur dashed boldly from the thicket and reined up by her side, saying :

"Fine sport to-day, my lady."

So astounded was she at his audacity that she dropped from her nerveless hand the rein upon the neck of her horse.

The man seized the bridle, saying : "Keep your seat carefully, my lady," and dashed away with her at great speed.

Terrified beyond measure, she uttered a shriek that rang out through the forest.

The Earl was also somewhat tired of the chase, and as he turned him about thought what a pleasure it would give him to join her, and how happy they

would be, riding slowly along back to the tower together. "I must know my fate! I feel assured of her love, and should be happy; but am not. Why does she at times shun my company, and appear so cold and distant? Why was she so overcome when I asked her to be mine? Why was her emotion so great as to cause her to fall into a deathlike swoon? Can it be that she had promised her hand to Gaston ere I came? She must explain. How I long to have her near me always; am never content to have her out of my sight." At this thought he dashed across a ravine and plunged through an intervening thicket. On coming out on the opposite side into an opening, he heard a shriek that froze the blood in his veins. Now reaching a high point, he had a glimpse of two figures disappearing among the trees beyond the place where he had seen Lady Kathryn. He instantly recognized her snowy plumes, also took in at a glance the pointed hat and crimson sash of the Italian by her side. And now he saw Kibbie, who was ever in her wake, dashing wildly down the slope toward the huntsmen.

Blowing a shrill blast as a signal of distress, the Earl dashed forward with utmost speed, and soon again caught sight of the red sash streaming in the wind. Again he sees them more clearly in the open glen; and hears the Italian's signal for his assistants.

Louis, who had heard His Lordship's signal of distress, turned instantly, and, calling to his four chosen men to follow, started wildly in the direction whence he had heard the signal, and would have taken the wrong course but for seeing Kibbie, who, pointing toward the spot and waving his hat frantically, cried:

"Help! Oh, help! My Lady Kathryn is in danger!" And, seeing the Earl disappearing in the distance down a by-path, changed his course and went in pursuit, followed by Kibbie, Hector McNeil and a number of his chasseurs; and, dashing into the open

glen, Louis could see the parties—Kathryn and the Italian, with the Earl in pursuit. Now he hears His Lordship cry out: “Yield, ruffian; yield, or I fire!”

The Italian turned in his saddle; and, seeing the Earl so close on him and a goodly number approaching at his back, drew a holster. Louis saw it gleam in the sunlight, and screamed:

“Shoot, my Lord; shoot!” Simultaneously two reports rang out on the air; a ball whizzed over the Earl’s head; the Italian’s arm dangled, limp and helpless, by his side. Another report rang out from a clump of hawthorns. The Italian, seeing the posse upon him, and being no longer able to lead Kathryn’s horse, turned to the right and disappeared. The Earl reached Kathryn’s side, then reeled and fell from his horse.

Louis cried: “After him, Hector! After him, my men! Let him not escape! Five thousand pounds for his head; while I look after my Lord and Lady Kathryn.”

Kathryn, white with terror, was swaying, ready to fall, when Louis caught her in his strong arms and lifted her from her saddle. Her head dropped upon his shoulders. He placed her almost senseless on the ground beside the Earl, to whom he then turned his attention.

His Lordship was conscious, but bleeding profusely, and asked anxiously:

“Where is she, Louis? Oh, where is she?”

“Here, my Lord, by your side; but she has fainted.”

“Has she—— Oh, Louis, has she sustained any injury?”

“No, no; only fainted, my Lord! Let me stop this flow of blood; surely you are not badly hurt!” But His Lordship did not reply; his lips grew white, and he swooned from loss of blood.

Now Kathryn drew a deep breath, opened her eyes,

and, looking about, saw Louis on his knees beside the Earl; and, raising herself to a sitting posture, cried out, with unutterable anguish:

"Is he dead? Oh, Louis, is he dead?"

Louis hastened to assure her that he had only swooned. Then ran to his horse, and from a saddle pocket drew forth a little flask of wine and pressed her to take a little, lest at the sight of blood she might swoon; he needed her assistance, he said, and she must brave up so as to help him. Seeing that she might render him assistance, she took it. "Now, my Lady, sit by him till I run to yonder spring and fetch a little water." With a strong self-control she opened his doublet at the throat, unbuttoned his collar-band, stroked his brow and face with her soft, warm hand, then took his inert hand in her own.

He sighed deeply, and, opening his eyes, looked up in her face and asked:

"Oh, my cousin, are you safe?"

"My Lord!" she cried, caressing the hand she clasped. "Perfectly safe; but you—— Oh, my Lord, you are wounded!"

Louis returned with a cup, which he had taken from his saddle, brimming with water. They attempted to give him some; and, making an effort to raise himself, he again swooned from excessive pain; upon which Kathryn fell into a deathlike swoon also.

Poor Louis knew not what to do, when some of the Weirwolf chasseurs arrived.

"Curlie," he cried to one of them, with fair hair in long curls, "will you hasten immediately for a physician? My Lord, I fear, is badly wounded. Is there not one to be found at the village? Is there one nearer than Lochaber?"

"Oh, sure, Master Louis; you must forget 'Uncle' Reuben that lives here, not far off, in his own little den. You ken he's a man gifted in surgery; there's

na need to send to Lochaber, nor ta the village neither."

"True, true, Curlie; 'Uncle' Reuben can be depended upon. Dash off now, Curlie, and fetch him straightway!" cried Louis anxiously.

"It's true I'll be doing that thing." And Curlie dashed away with the speed of the wind. Now the ladies came up, followed by a crowd, pell-mell. All was in commotion, and there was a wild scene.

Lady Hawren, herself almost swooning from fright, ran to Louis' assistance. Annie and Guy came and took charge of Kathryn, bathing her face with cooling water. Guy despatched Andy McGraw for the coach-and-six to convey the Earl to Weirwolf Castle, which was nearer to them where they now were than back to the tower, where he might have more comfortable quarters and better care.

One of Hector's men was sent on to notify Mr. Kitchner, who was in charge at Weirwolf, of the accident, and inform him that the party would soon arrive at that place.

Curlie soon returned with "Uncle" Reuben, who, he said, he had found walking in the wood, not far from them. The surgeon of Weirwolf chase was a peculiar man, yet had a good countenance and a kind disposition. Disappointment of some kind, it was said, had caused him to withdraw from his fellowmen, and to take up his abode in a little cottage in the chase, where he had resided alone for a number of years, attending gratuitously on those who needed his assistance. He knew and loved the Earl well, for it was through his bounty that he enjoyed the small home he had in the chase, and was greatly shocked on finding him so seriously wounded. He at once set about giving him immediate relief, and said instead of going back to the tower they would better convey him to the castle, only four miles away, where he himself might be with His

Lordship all the time, as he was badly wounded, and the sooner they could get him to the castle the better it would be for him.

On their arrival at the castle the Earl was placed in his own luxuriously furnished bedroom of the suite on the first floor, just across the great hall from the library. The crimson curtains were flung aside to admit the fresh air. The four-mile drive had been very fatiguing on him. The wound, on closer examination, proved to be not so serious as had at first been feared; only a pistol shot wound through the flesh of the shoulder, splintering the edge of the shoulder-blade. His nervous system had received a great shock; and he was weak and faint from loss of blood, though the old surgeon had done his duty admirably; and when the wound had been carefully dressed he assured the Earl's friends and the menials that thronged the hall, all wishing to lend assistance, that the wound was in good condition and would soon be healing.

Alexander Kitchner, castellan, Hector's brother-in-law, who lived here with his wife and Hector's mother and two younger sisters, had all things in readiness for their reception, and was expecting them next day, but was not the least put out by their arrival one night earlier than he had expected them.

The surroundings at Weirwolf were now in superb style. Mr. Kitchner kept a steward, with a fine corps of attendants and servants for every place; every department was filled to perfection and kept in fine order. In the grounds the hedges were trimmed, the lawns mowed, ornamental trees and shrubs trained to perfection; terraces, parterres, garden—all rejoicing in the luxury of late blooming flowers and fine foliage.

How the ladies would have enjoyed a visit to this delightful old place, had it not been for the sad occurrence of this afternoon! As it was, they were all sad. Kathryn was quite ill; the shock on her nerves had

been so great that for a long time she lay in a syncopal condition, and was even now in a state of prostration.

Next morning the Earl was found to be quite feverish and delirious. Lady Hawren had sat by him all night, with Louis and Guy. And now Lord and Lady de Bruce came to relieve the night watchers, and took their places by his side, administering all the comfort possible; but he cried out continually in his delirium:

"I must go to her rescue! Oh, do not detain me! Let me go!"

They would rouse him and assure him of her safety; then he would smile and say: "Yes, yes; I know it!" Then would drop off again and rave for her, crying: "Where is she? Oh, if she were only here!" Then would he moan piteously. The physician now being present, asked who it was whom His Lordship so constantly asked for in his ravings. On being told it was the lady whom he had rescued, he asked:

"Is not she able to come and sit by him, and thus quiet him? He is very restless, and has been so throughout the night. I fear the consequence. If we could only get him to understand that she is here and safe he might rest easier. Surely she will not refuse to come and sit beside him, and thus assure him by her presence that she is safe."

"Oh, certainly, Doctor; she will come if she is able! I will see her," said Lady Hawren.

"Then, my Lady, you need rest; you have attended him faithfully through the whole night without rest. Surely you will now retire for a while."

"I cannot rest while in so much anxiety, but will fetch Kathryn if she is able to come."

"We will remain beside him, Lady Hawren; do try to get a little rest. You will be ill," said Lady de Bruce kindly.

Lady Hawren soon returned with Kathryn, who was pale, and almost swooned on beholding him

flushed with fever, tossing and moaning and calling wildly for her. She sank into a chair which the doctor placed for her by the bedside. Lady de Bruce was bathing his face with a cooling lotion. The doctor had a little talk with Kathryn, and she promised him she would remain beside the Earl if her mother would go and get a much-needed rest, which Lady Hawren consented to do. The doctor now also left the apartment.

The Earl tossed and moaned, and presently cried out:

"Where is she? I must go! Let me go!"

Lord de Bruce, who held his hand, said: "My Lord, do not worry; she is here by your side."

But he still cried: "Oh, if she were only here; they have carried her away! I must—I must go!" he cried wildly.

"I am here," said Kathryn, taking his hand in both of hers and weeping tears upon it. On hearing her voice, he opened his eyes, and, looking up into her face, said:

"Oh, Kate, I am so glad you are here! I could not live without you!" He pressed her hand to his burning lips, closed his eyes, and sank into a peaceful slumber, no longer tortured by the thought that she had been carried away from him. She still held his hand in hers, and was rejoiced to behold his peaceful sleep; for they told her this was the first quiet he had enjoyed. After an hour of refreshing sleep he roused in apparent distress, and said: "Where is she now?"

"Here, my Lord; beside you. Is there anything you wish for?"

He pressed her hand and answered: "Nothing, nothing! I am so happy!"

She moistened his lips with rose water, and thus, with sweet solicitude, she hovered over him for five days, while his fever lasted, bathing his hands with cooling waters, and fanning him with an Argus pheas-

ant's wing, which choice fan had been presented to her while in Paris by her mother's uncle, Count Dubois-Raymond, who had brought it from India on his last trip to that country. Louis and Guy kept watch over him at night. Owing to the prompt and correct treatment he had received at the outset from the old surgeon, and the cheering presence of the one he loved, His Lordship improved rapidly.

On the second day, while his fever had for a time abated, he had asked of Louis, who sat with Kathryn beside him:

"Louis, what of the villains?"

"My Lord, I sent Hector with five men after them; but much to his mortification he returned without capturing any one; himself with a sabre-thrust in the arm, and two of his men badly wounded."

"They came in close contact, then?"

"Not with the Italian, my Lord; there were others."

"Fetch Hector in, Louis, if he is able to come."

The fine-looking Scot soon made his appearance, his arm in a plaid swung from his neck.

"Well, Hector?" said the Earl, as they clasped hands.

"Oh, my Laird, it grieves me sair to see Your Lordship sae badly wounded!"

"It is pretty bad Hactor; but how is it with yourself, my boy?"

"Hout, hout! Nothing to speak o', my Laird; only a scart! It hurts me waur to think I should no ha' beene able to ding the buckie into a dead-thraw. The loopie cateran! To think that he sould try to fetch away the douce Leddie; God sain her!" he said, glancing at Kathryn, who on his entrance had risen and now stood with Rosa near the door by which he had entered.

"Who else, Hector, were hurt?"

"Fitz-Allan, my Laird, was clappit i' the spule-

blade, much as was Your Lordship, sir; i' the back-spaul, sir; and Ashton Riggles was dinged i' the hough. We never came uppe wi' the brigand, sir; he went skelping off wi' his arm dangling. There were two other of the caterans, my Laird. The ane wha' sent the ball skelping through Your Lordship's spule-blade stood i' the copse, on Your Lordship's right, wearing a black mask, sich as the leddies wear i' the chase. I dashit onto him and gave him a scart i' the cheek-happit that took the mask off him and sent the sonsy chiel, wi' a skellock, skelping through the cops-wood, Your Lordship."

"How looked he, Hector?" asked the Earl anxiously.

"Genteel, my Laird; dark, not large; medium, heavysset, rather, wi' black hair, which fell in long curls when the mask dropped off; handsome moustache, braw, spawky, well mounted; he dashit off at a braw gate. The ither ane was a heavysset villain, wi' buff coat beltit doon, wi' broadsword and pistols, and looked like the de'il's own buckie—begging Your Lordship's pardon. Fitz-Allan dashit on him, wi' great pluck, and gied him a snell-shot that gard the swankie gang i' the same gate o' the ither rampaging villain. By my certies he will no be wanting, sune, to make sic a nither cantrip, the land-louper! We went in pursuit, my Laird, and would na ha' come back empty-handed, neither, but ran into an ambush; the brush was alive wi' the caterans. I received a sword-thrust ere I knew anything. Fitz-Allan and Riggles both were wountit. I called off, and we came back. It was no use fighting such odds i' the brush."

"No, Hector; you did well—you could do no more. How are Fitz and Riggles faring?"

"Doing well, my Laird; resting easy."

"Have the surgeon do all he can, Hector, for the poor fellows."

"I will, my Laird; thank you."

On leaving the room, as Hector was passing Kathryn and Rosa near the door, they advanced; and Kathryn, seizing his hand, said:

"Oh, Captain McNeil, allow me to thank you for your promptness! You saved me—you saved my Lord's life! I will never forget your bravery—never forget you; never! Are you sure you struck the one who shot my Lord Clifton?"

"Quite sure, my Lady; I saw plainly the smoke from the muzzle of his pistol as I rushed upon him and gave him a slash i' the cheek that will disfigure his handsome face for the balance o' his life; the blood ran in a stream doon his braw clase, as he dashed into the thicket."

"Oh, Captain McNeil, ever look upon me as your true friend! By your promptness you have saved me!" She pressed his hand cordially.

Then Rosa seized upon the hand of the bashful young man, saying:

"Allow me, also, Captain McNeil, to thank you for your bravery in defending my friends; for the villains are the very same who a few days ago would have taken my sister away. I would I had been wi' ye; I'd ha' scart him i' the other cheek-happit, and gied him somewhat to skellock for," she said, using the Scotch dialect; and continued:

"I will never forget you, Captain McNeil, nor your valorous attack on the enemy."

Hector bowed low and said: "I deserve no thanks, leddies; I would I could ha' done something more deserving o' your gratitude."

Soon the Earl was enough better to be led into the great hall, where from a comfortable sofa he could have a pleasant view from the doorway, and where he was surrounded by all the gay young people, and grew better day by day; yet he required Kathryn to sit by him and charm away the hours, waving over him the

Argus pheasant's wing, and now and then bathe his face with sweet, cooling lotions.

"My Lord," said Kathryn, at the close of a long day, "Annie will take the fan now and sit here beside you, while I shall go and dress for dinner."

"You will not be long gone?" he asked appealingly, holding her by the hand with both of his.

"No, my Lord," she said softly, her face, of late so pallid, suffused with a charming color, as she glided noiselessly from the hall.

Annie, taking the fan, sat down and said smilingly:

"My Lord, I fear you are practising deception."

"Miss Hamilton!"

"Yes, sir; you are certainly able now to dispense with so very much attention. I perceive you are able to use your right hand readily, without wincing."

"How, now, Miss Annie! What mean you?"

"Oh, I saw you but now using your right hand deftly; you are imposing on the dearest girl in the world, keeping her cooped up here by your side day by day, while the rest of us are enjoying delightful rides and rambles. Besides, my Lord, you should now be getting out some yourself."

"Pray, Miss Annie, am I deceiving any one?"

"Not even the 'dearest girl in the world.'"

"Then what harm am I doing if no one is deceived? Annie, this is a new sensation to me, and so very enjoyable; I do not see how I shall ever get out again. Only consider! I never before had a lady attend me in illness; it robs suffering of all its terrors thus to be attended."

"Come, enough of this; you look pale, and need the gentle warmth of the setting sun yourself. I will take you outside. Let me help you to rise. We will promenade a while in the lovely court; you need the exercise." She took his hand, and carefully he rose; then, leaning on her arm, they walked slowly down the hall,

then out into the courtyard. And as they walked she said:

"My Lord, have you observed how pale and thin Kathryn has grown, being shut in here for the past week, without outdoor exercise?"

"Oh, Annie, have I been so thoughtless—so selfish, and have kept her too closely confined inside with me? Is she looking thin and ill?"

"Do not accuse yourself, my Lord. No, it is not that. The fright she received was too much for her nervous system—the sight of the Italian, whom she recognized at once as the person described by Miss Augusta—and then seeing Your Lordship shot down by her side; it was very trying. Louis says she thought you dead, and it was some time ere he could convince her to the contrary. She swooned several times, and lay unconscious for hours; next morning when in your delirium you called repeatedly for her, and when the doctor sent a request for her to come she rose from her bed, scarcely able to walk. Yet, previous to that event, I noticed that she had been growing more and more delicate; she is no longer plump and rosy, as formerly; and a deep sadness seems to prevail over her at all times. My Lord, how glad she will be to find you here, and know that you are able to get out for a little walk and a breath of the evening air! And I trust Your Lordship will suffer no inconvenience from walking in the court. Ah, here she comes now! How delighted she is to find you outside! See her smile of approval as she flies toward us!"

Kathryn, on her return, charmingly dressed for dinner, was much pleased to find the Earl walking out with Annie; she joined them, and they led him into the dining room, instead of having his dinner sent him on a tray, as heretofore.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOVE CONFESSED.

"Oh, tell me, brightly gleaming eye,
Whence in your little orbits lie
So many traits of fire,
Expressing each a new desire;
Now, with pride or scorn you darkle,
Now, with love, with gladness sparkle,
While we, who view the varying mirror,
Feel, by turns, both hope and terror."

NEXT day the Earl took more exercise, walking from room to room. Annie had even coaxed him into the garden for a while; now he was tired out, and lay on a lounge in the cool drawing-room. Kathryn sat near, gently swaying the fan over him. She adjusted the pillows about his head. He closed his eyes, and she left him sweetly sleeping. She stepped into the sumptuous library, and stood for a while in deep meditation in the embrasure of a French window, gazing out on the happy scene below, where boys and girls were romping merrily in the long shadows of the great building. The ladies were sitting on the grass-green terrace, watching the game. Rosa and Lord Phantomfell were walking in and out among the shrubbery, for since the moonlight nights at the Old Tower His Lordship appeared to have transferred his affections from Miss Augusta to her hoidenish sister. And when accosted by Louis as to what his intentions were, said:

"I weally have not yet decided which one I will take, Mr. Kearney; Miss Augustah is wery much to

my taste, yet the little witch is so chawming. Weally, I cannot—it is just hawd for me to decide.”

To which Louis had returned: “Beyond a doubt, my Lord, this matter will be decided for you. Give yourself no further trouble on that score.”

In a profound reverie Kathryn stood; then, hearing a gentle footfall, she turned quickly, and found the Earl beside her.

“My Lord, I thought you were soundly sleeping,” she said, with a start.

“Thank you, I have enjoyed a most refreshing nap, and a delicious dream.” And he looked with pleasure on the animated scene below.

“But now I am in distress; the doctor has told me that I no longer require his attention, or that of a nurse.”

“Oh, my Lord, I am truly glad that you feel so well—are restored to health,” she said, with a glance into his glorious eyes. She loved him better than life and felt that she could never repay the generous gallantry that had saved her from the horror of falling into the hands of a villain whom she had cause to fear. The miserable stories she had heard and the promise she had made did not now recur to her mind; she was just happy in his presence, that was all. The Earl went on:

“And now must I again be separated from you, from one who has been the source of such sweet happiness and comfort to me in my illness—the gentlest and most tender nurse man ever had? Oh, Kate, I could not have lived through it all but for thy gentle hand upon my brow, soothing away the burning fever that was consuming me and causing me to rave in delirium!” he said, taking her hand. “What a fair and ministering angel art thou, my Kate!” He pressed her unresisting hand to his lips.

“Oh, my Lord, my generous preserver, my deliverer! I owe you all! You have saved me from a

dangerous enemy, risking your life in the attempt. What would I not do for one who has displayed so much gallant generosity! I am doubly repaid for all by seeing you your own strong self again. You have saved me from an awful fate, and my gratitude knows no bounds——”

“Gratitude, Kate, is not what I want. You already know that I love you with all the fervor of my nature — love profound and inexpressible. Idol of my heart, I want your love! Can you—do you love me?” Encircling her with his arm, he drew her unresistingly against his breast; her face lay against his, as she gently murmured:

“Yes! Oh, yes, I do! I do!” In an ecstasy of bliss he kissed her face and lips. But as she pronounced the words, admitting her love, the remembrance of what her grandfather had told her, and the promise she had made, rushed upon her mind with redoubled force.

“Darling, darling! You will be mine—you will be my wife! My own!”

“Never, never! I cannot—my promise—those vile ac—cus——”

Swooning quite away, she lay upon his breast, all unconscious of the passionate kisses that failed to arouse her.

“Oh, my God! What can I do?” She swoons again. “And I was so happy!”

Holding her close to his bosom, he murmured: “Darling, darling! Look at me! What promise? Why never? Speak; oh, speak to me!” Then placing her on a sofa, he fled to the hall and snatched from the table a Majolica vase, containing sweet marjoram water, remembering its efficacy, having seen them use it when he himself had felt faint; and, picking up a dainty little handkerchief she had dropped, sank upon his knees beside her; and, saturating it with the con-

tents of the vase, he bathed her marble-like face, and kissed her lips, calling on her to speak to him. Presently she sighed, then opened her eyes; but instead of the happy light he so much wished to see in their depths she regarded him with a look of intense anguish. Kissing her lips again, he cried:

"Darling, speak; oh, speak to me!"

"Leave me; oh, leave me!" she exclaimed, in anguish.

He gathered her in his arms and said:

"Listen, dearest; you said you loved me. How shall I leave you, when you have rendered me so happy by the admission?"

"Believe it not!"

"Darling, you will be mine?"

"Never—I cannot—go, go! Leave me! A promise I have made can never be broken. Stern duty holds me in his grasp. Leave me, my Lord, if you love me. And please send Marie to me at once." Straining her to his heart, he kissed her lips and said:

"I bow to your command." Wandering aimlessly about the garden, amid the deep shadows of the evening, he met Elsie, Annie's maid, whom he dispatched for Marie, saying: "Send her to her Mistress, Elsie, whom she will find in the library." He then betook him to the ladies' bower, where, filled with "rumination sad," he threw himself with great abandon upon a banquette; and thus he lay till the dews of night began to fall, and darkness sent Louis with Jean to look for him.

Marie conducted Lady Kathryn immediately to her apartment, where she disrobed and put her to bed, bringing at her bidding and using liberally volatiles, sweet-smelling fluids and a pouncet of rare perfume. And with all this Kate sank back on her pillow, white as death.

Marie was frightened, and cried, as she administered

her restoratives: "Oh, miladi! Shall I nod call your mudder?"

"No, no, Marie; be quiet! Bathe my face with sweet marjoram water."

"Ah, ma beaute! Shall I nod bring you zome tea or coffee? Shall I tell your mudder ma petite ees eel?"

Kathryn clasped her hands, her bosom rose and fell. The tender-hearted Marie, looking on her cold, white face, wept and wrung her hands in great distress. Kathryn, observing her distress, said, extending her hands:

"Oh, dear girl, come here!" And she clasped in her arms her sympathetic friend, saying: "Do not feel distressed for me, Marie. Oh, must I cause grief to all who love me! No, no! I must not, I must *not*."

Since the Earl had been pronounced quite recovered, preparations had at once been begun for the return to Fleetwood, although Lady Kathryn was ill and the Earl not so well as he had been and looked unusually pale and haggard. In two days they would start back, if Kathryn was well enough to undertake the journey.

Kathryn, though not really ill, left not her room again until the morning set for their departure. On this morning the Earl walked up and down the great hall. Presently Lady Hawren came down. He met her eagerly at the foot of the broad stairway.

"Dear Aunt, how is my cousin this morning; how is Lady Kathryn?" he asked, taking her hand.

"She will be able to come down to breakfast this morning, my Lord, I thank you; and feels that she is strong enough to undertake the journey."

"My dear aunt, I sincerely trust she may be," he said, as he conducted Her Ladyship to the drawing-room; then he turned and continued walking up and down at the foot of the stairway. He was very restless. Presently he heard voices on the stair; then he hastened to meet Kathryn, whom he now saw descend-

ing, between Marie and Hortense, leaning languidly on their arms.

She looked charming, though very delicate, in a rich crimson carriage dress, which she had donned for the journey, wearing a fresh knot of white flowers with the morning dew still on them which he had but a few moments before sent up to her by Kibbie Kent. Her face was pale, though her lips were scarlet, and a flush mantled her cheeks as their eyes met. She bowed with a sweet smile, and, on reaching the floor, withdrew from the support of the maids and made him a graceful curtsy, the maids falling behind. He approached and took her hand, which trembled nervously in his, and, pressing it ardently to his lips, said fervently:

"Dear cousin, how rejoiced am I that you are able to descend and come among us once more! Do you feel sure that you are well enough to undertake this journey, or——"

"Oh, yes, yes, my Lord; I feel that it will be beneficial to me; more so than aught else!"

"True, it will do you good to get out on the road. You have been shut within doors for a fortnight; and all for me, for me! For two long weeks you sat by my side, and I so selfish as to request it of you. I have done you an injustice for which I can never atone, even by a lifetime of devotion," he said softly.

She rewarded him with a smile so sweet as almost to deprive him of his breath, and said: "My dear Lord, I owe you more than my life; pray do not speak of having done me an injustice. It would, rather, have been an injustice had you refused to permit my attendance at your bedside, when you have almost given your life for me."

He pressed her hand tenderly and gave her a look replete with grateful love; then they passed in to the breakfast parlor, where the others had preceded them.

Two hours later the Earl came out, equipped for the journey, leaning on Louis' faithful arm. The coach drew up near the door; the spirited horses pranced and tossed their plumed heads. The inside of the royal old coach was sumptuous with embroidered trappings, rose-colored linings, and soft cushions. Kathryn was placed on the back seat, where she sank languidly and reclined among the soft, richly wrought cushions. And how grateful was the Earl, when Lady Hawren said:

"My Lord, I have had the back seat fitted up with pillows and cushions for the comfort of you two invalids."

He rewarded her with a happy smile as he followed Kathryn and found her ensconced amid the delicate comforts for the journey.

What a heaven to sit thus beside her and look on her face, though pale and pensive grown, throughout the whole of two days' journey to Carlisle, after having been deprived of her company for two days by her illness! Toward the close of day, after a pleasant journey, they arrived at Carlisle. Lord and Lady de Bruce would hear to nothing else but they must stop and spend at least a week with them in their pleasant city home in Carlisle. As Kathryn continued quite delicate, Lady Hawren consented. Annie also remained, the rest of the party, except the Earl, going on to Fleetwood.

Kathryn had stood the journey comparatively well, half reclining in the grand old coach; yet was she still delicate and feverish, falling away each day. Doctor Godkins had returned, and, on hearing of their presence in the city, came bustling over to hear all about the hunting, the encounter with the ruffians, and the Earl's misfortune in receiving so dangerous a wound, regretting much that he had not been on hand to attend His Lordship, and was distressed beyond measure

on finding Kate in such a low state of health. Her preternatural beauty smote his heart; for therein he read the ruin which a breaking heart "spreads by degrees over loveliness." Her nervous system was undergoing a fearful strain.

"Dear Lady Hawren," he said, "it is beyond my ability to prescribe anything but a change of scene, a change of air—a sea voyage, in fact, will be the very thing for her. She is not so ill, but there's some hidden trouble that keeps her from rest; her heart is involved. It is a disease beyond my practice. A perturbation of mind and heart. The air of a sea voyage or some such change is all I can prescribe."

The Earl also remained a few days in town, resting, and repeating to the doctor and his numerous other friends the story of the affray, and all about the hunting, the sport, and the pleasant time they had enjoyed. Then he and Doctor Godkins departed for Fleetwood.

The Countess of Carlisle called on the ladies and expressed much sympathy for Kathryn, whom she loved very much, saying:

"Cheer up, my Lady Kathryn! I am to give a select ball next week, and you must be well enough to attend; for I assure you"—and she whispered in Kathryn's ear that the others might not hear—"our friend, the gentle Simonides, will be there," and she laughed gaily. "I made the Earl of Fleetwood promise to return and attend the ball, and am anticipating a most delightful time." After the young ladies had promised they would attend her ball she departed in fine spirits. Then Lady de Bruce and the Misses Bruneau began to persuade Lady Hawren to allow Kathryn to accompany them back to Paris, for Rosa was to return to the Conservatoire de Paris for another ten months, and the family would, in the meantime, reside in Paris.

Lady Hawren had recently received a letter from her uncle, urging her to send Kathryn to them for a year or more, for school advantages. All this appealed to Lady Hawren's heart, for she had so much desired to have Kathryn finish her education in Paris. So, altogether, it was not so hard for her to decide. Then the doctor had recommended a sea voyage and change of scene. She was perfectly willing to entrust her to the care of Lady de Bruce, and being in company with the young ladies would be most pleasant and cheering; besides, she had long desired to have her visit her uncle's interesting family. Truly this was the best opportunity she might ever have. And Madame had for some time been anxious to return to her native land. So Kathryn should go, taking both Madame and Marie with her. No matter about her own self, the pangs of separation, Kathryn must embrace this opportunity. Accordingly, arrangements were made straightway for the voyage.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COUNTESS' BALL.

"Here shone a garden—lamps all o'er,
As tho' the spirits of the air
Had taken it in their heads to pour
A shower of summer meteors there;—
While a lighted shrubbery led
To a small lake that sleeping lay,
Cradled in foliage, but, o'er head,
Open to heaven's sweet breath and ray."

THE week soon passed away, and the evening appointed for the ball arrived, soft and balmy almost as a summer's eve.

The Countess' balls were always glorious affairs; and this was to be a farewell ball, for in a very short time she and the Earl of Carlisle—Lord Lieutenant of Cumberland—were to repair to London, he to attend the coming session of Parliament, while she indulged to her heart's content in the gay social life of the great Metropolis. Her spacious drawing-rooms were soon filled to overflowing with the elite of the city. The Misses Bruneau, Annie and Kathryn, bedecked in their loveliest toilettes, were cordially welcomed; partners were found for them, and they were soon promenading about the lovely rooms, in the garden, or on the borders of a lovely lake, which in tranquillity lay at the back of the beautiful garden.

A little late the Earl came, in magnificent evening dress, a brocaded coat with white ruffles of point de France, a soft white tie with rich ends falling over the figured satin vest front, a radiant baldric with slender sword, over which he wore a light cloak of scarlet satin, clasped on the left shoulder with a buckle studded with sparkling gems. He was attended by Rorey, in page's dress, a scarlet-laced doublet and feathered hat bordered with gold lace and point de Espagne.

In the cloakroom Lord Clifton met his old-time friend, Virgil de Vere, whom he had not seen for many months. After a cordial handclasp, happy once again to be thrown together, they entered the drawing-room, where they were warmly greeted by the host and hostess. The merry Countess, shaking de Vere's hand, whispered in his ear, to which he, smiling, said:

"Is she, so! I am rejoiced to hear this!" And, passing on, was soon lost in the great crowd. The Countess greeted the Earl of Fleetwood, saying:

"My Lord, how are you now? I much feared you were not coming! How glad am I to see you! And—surely you are looking better," still holding him by the hand, detaining him.

"Thank you, dear Lady Carlisle; I am feeling quite well again. Doctor Godkins accompanied me home and has been dosing me on tonics for a week, and I feel greatly benefited."

"Ah, so glad! So glad!" she exclaimed, from the depths of a kindly heart, relinquishing his hand. He turned and entered the brilliant throng, spoke to a number of his friends, but saw de Vere nowhere. Presently, finding Miss Bruneau who, no doubt, was on the *qui vive* for him, he promenaded for a while with her, for he never joined in the dance. He asked for Lady Kathryn and Miss Hamilton, but she had seen nothing of them since they first arrived. Possibly they, with her sister, had gone into the garden. Now he came up with some ladies of his acquaintance, and chatted with them for a while; then met many others, all inquiring as to his health, and expressing much sympathy for him on account of the accident which had befallen him, in the midst, too, of his glorious chase, which otherwise, doubtless, would have afforded him so much pleasure. While he received their sympathy and homage with great courtesy, his anxious eye roved from one to another, seeking the assemblage over for Lady Kathryn, the one woman in this great crowd in whom he was really interested.

Now after a fruitless search the folding doors leading to the banquetting room were thrown open, and supper was announced.

The Earl hesitated; he must seek some lady whom he might attend to supper. Now the Countess, seeing him, approaches, wearing an exultant smile, and cries:

"Oh, my Lord, I have succeeded! I am so rejoiced!"

"What now, my Lady? Are you at your old mischief match-making again?" he asked.

"Yes, my Lord! Oh, I have a pair now of whom I feel perfectly sure. Ah, how they take to each other!"

They are well suited; and, oh, how they do love each other already! I know! 'Tis not their first meeting, either; I managed to bring them together some time ago, on his arrival from Paris; but he was forced to leave again so soon. They are my best friends, too, my Lord, after yourself. Ah, see! Here they are now—your pretty cousin and my good friend, Virgil de Vere.”

Sure enough, there passed Virgil de Vere with Lady Kathryn leaning gracefully on his arm! He was saying something, at which Kathryn laughed out merrily and looked happier, he thought, than for a long time; and, though so ethereal, so thin and delicate, her beauty to-night was regal. She was glorious! And so engaged were they that they passed on, never observing the Earl and Countess.

“Now, my Lord, I appeal to your superior taste; is not that a charming couple? And how they *do* love each other! Nothing gives me more pleasure than thus to bring together two lovely young people whose hearts entwine as one!” Her voice fell on his aching heart as a shower of living fire; he found it difficult to breathe; his heart throbbed wildly, as she continued: “My Lord, shall we not follow on to supper, or have you a friend somewhere whom you wish to take?”

“My dear Countess, no!” he said, scarce able to articulate; and, offering her his arm: “There’s no one I wish to take but Your Ladyship.”

Kathryn and de Vere had disappeared from his sight; and he began to wonder whether he had seen them; or was it a dream, a vision of loveliness which had appeared to him?

On reaching the table, he placed the Countess and took a seat at her left; on raising his eyes, he found Kathryn and de Vere vis-à-vis with them. He was deadly pale; but bowed to her with a sweet smile. She returned his greeting, and said tremulously.

"Oh, my Lord, I had not seen you, and knew not whether you had come!"

He replied courteously; and the two couples conversed some little across the table. The Countess was brilliant, and beside herself with joy at the progress she thought her two special friends were making toward a matrimonial alliance.

Kathryn, at first almost overcome by a tremor which always came over her on meeting the Earl, soon rallied, and, with an assumed vivacity, joined in the conversation.

The Countess presently said to the Earl in an undertone:

"Oh, my Lord, only observe how attentive he is to her! Oh, it is glorious to bring together two souls that were made for each other! I can see that he adores her; and she, my Lord, loved him at first sight! I know, for I brought them together—introduced him to her on her first visit here; and you should have seen, my Lord, how they were 'smit wi' love' at first sight! My Lord, she is lovely! I was charmed on our first meeting, the night of the grand wedding Your Lordship gave at Fleetwood; and then said that if I were a man I'd not sit supinely by and allow my Lord Graeme to bear away so lovely a prize. By the way, what has become of Lord Graeme, that we are no longer rendered happy by his presence and his exquisite voice in song?"

"My Lady," returned the Earl, who was almost wild with anxiety, "he may be in France, where he sometimes abides, or is possibly on his own estate in Westmoreland." And so the Countess rattled on, led from one thought to another, causing his gentle heart to rankle with anguish. He now ventured to raise his eyes to Kathryn's face, which he observed was suffused with a glorious shade of pink, as she listened to de Vere's ardent words, as he supposed. But this is

what de Vere was really saying that brought the lovely flush to her delicate cheeks:

"Now, my dear Lady, I am good at reading hearts, and see clearly that yours is all given to one who loves you as his life; and he is well worthy of the purest woman's love. He is the best man I ever knew; the noblest of the noble! I know him well, for we spent four years together in dear old Oxford as chums; then we traveled the Continent in company. He is as pure as the loveliest woman, and that is saying much, I think."

"It is, indeed, sir; but I accept it as true—every word!" she said.

At which she raised her eyes, her face all aglow, at the praise he was bestowing on her heart's idol, and met the Earl's earnest, inquiring gaze. She smiled sweetly, then her eyelids drooped over the gentle tell-tale eyes. And she wondered what could be the matter with the Earl. What meant that—something—she had never before seen in his eyes?

After supper Kathryn was surrounded by many new friends and acquaintances. The lovely evening had passed almost away and the Earl had not forced himself into her presence, but hung aloof in a most wretched state. It was now growing late; and, feeling most miserable, he thought he must leave. Throwing on his cloak, he took his hat, but still lingered, walking up and down a dimly lighted and deserted corridor, whence he had a glimpse of the happy guests, as he now and then passed the open doors of the drawing-rooms and the gay ballroom. Up and down he walked, thinking of the mockery all this gaiety presented to his wretched soul.

From the cheerful drawing-room Kathryn, half reclining in a sumptuous easy-chair, almost overcome with anxiety, amazed, and marveling that he had not come near her, caught a glimpse of him, in his cloak,

hat in hand, as if ready to depart. On the impulse of the moment she broke away from a throng of admirers and quietly slipped into the corridor. The Earl had paused at the end of the corridor, and stood looking listlessly forth into the night from a great window which was there. A gentle hand was laid upon his arm. Starting from a reverie, he found Kathryn by his side. Now a flush of mortification suffused her face, for she had never before been guilty of such boldness, and wished that she might shrink away from his sight. But she intuitively felt that he was in some way wounded in his feelings, perhaps by her being with de Vere, and from the kindness of her heart she wished to relieve his mind, and said nervously:

"Oh, my Lord, surely you are not going without—without—— Oh, you have not spoken to me yet, of Flora, and Mrs. Macleod—and how are all at Fleetwood? And yourself, my Lord; you—you"—looking up into his eyes—"you look pallid; I fear you are not—not well yet——" She stopped, utterly confused.

"Darling," he said, placing his hand on hers, trembling on his arm, "you were so engaged I could not interrupt you in your happiness."

"And were going to leave?" she asked, choking up utterly.

"I was not feeling well, and thought it best that I should retire."

"Oh, my Lord, and I have so much to say to you! Have you seen mother?"

"Yes, darling; I stopped at Lord de Bruce's before coming here—for that reason I was late—and had a conversation with Lady Hawren; besides, she had written, consulting me on the subject of sending you, in company with Lord de Bruce's family, to spend some time in Paris."

"And you—you, my Lord, were willing to have me go?"

"I—I thought it best—the doctor said you must have a change. But you have something you wish to say? May we not walk in the garden a little?"

"Yes, my Lord; I will get my shawl." She darted into a sideroom, and soon emerged with an Indian shawl; and, placing her hand upon his arm, they went down the long corridor. Near the door of egress, on a Boule table, lay a lute; he took it along, saying:

"You will sing for me once more—I will listen again to the melody of your voice."

"Oh, my Lord, my heart is too sad to sing; it will be but a sad melody!" They stepped out into the night air. In the garden the shrubbery was radiant with the light of a thousand little lamps. "And, my Lord, mother told you that she had decided—that the fiat has gone forth that I am to sail for Paris in two weeks with Lord and Lady de Bruce?"

"She did, my cousin; and does the thought of leaving make you sad?"

"Yes, indeed, my Lord! How can I leave mother and—and—all?" she stammered.

"I know, darling; but it will not be for long."

Kathryn looked up into his face wonderingly; he spoke patronizingly, as though he were her father, brother, uncle, or guardian—someone who was to see to her well-being. He called her darling, just as a father might do; he had never acted thus before. She did not understand, and looked inquiringly into his eyes.

"Oh, my Lord," she cried; "nearly a whole year!"

"Aye, truly! A long time it might seem; but—he—your—friend—he often goes to Paris—resides there mostly. You will see him often," he said brokenly.

"My Lord! My cousin!" she exclaimed.

"Darling, your happiness is more to me than my life. I love my friend; I love you; your happiness is first with me, and I would lay down my life to secure it.

Do not allow one thought of me to disturb your happy lot. A thousand leagues beyond the sea lies a beautiful land; lovely, with fine forests, majestic mountains, winding streams, sparkling lakes, summer fruits and flowers. I will seek the remotest ends of the earth; quit the court, take up the camp, and go where glory calls and fame awaits me. I yield you to him, one of nature's noblemen. I would not, if I could, blast the lives of two young and loving hearts. You told me, at Weirwolf, that you had promised, *something*—I did not understand—I did not know——” His voice trembled, he could scarcely articulate. She stopped short; she gazed on his face, her crimson Bengal falling away from her fair shoulders. They had been walking slowly along since they stepped out into the balmy air of night, and now stood beside the little lake. The fragrant zephyrs came laden from the bowers; a fair arcade was here and there, displaying lights and lovely flowers; rich melody is wafted to them, borne on the soft breezes of the night; the garden, bedecked with loveliness, lay before them. There flowed a sparkling fountain near. The canopy, over all, was superbly soft and blue.

“My Lord, what *do* you mean?” she cried, aghast.

“Why, darling, you told me about ‘Simonides.’ And I know that you—that you must love him—I blame him not for loving you. Then the Countess—told me—told me—all——” he said hopelessly.

“Love *him*? I, love *him*? My Lord, you are laboring under a mistake! The Countess has misled you. We are but good friends; he does not love me—I cannot love two at once; I told you that I love *you*! I can never love another.”

“Darling, darling, say you so! Oh, what a weight of anguish you have lifted from my heart!” he cried, as he clasped her to his breast.

“But—but our love is hopeless—is hopeless!” she

wailed. "My promise——" And, struggling from him, she sank upon a seat and covered her face with her hands. She was excited and so delicate he feared she might swoon, as she had done. There were many couples strolling about among the lighted shrubbery; and to be found there with a young lady swooning in his arms was anything but desirable. He must soothe her feelings; he had been so passionate, he argued with himself.

He sat down beside her; the lake lay peacefully sleeping at their feet, reflecting a thousand twinkling lights. In this enchanting spot the noise of the dancers might not reach their ears; but the more ethereal joys of minstrelsy might soothe the tumultuous throbings of their hearts. He gazed on her lucid eyes, her face suffused with tears, her lips trembling with emotion. How he wished to ask her what promise she had made; why she should say their love was hopeless; but he must soothe, not excite her. Now that he knew that she loved him, and him only, he could wait; he must curb his impatience and wait. Upon the ground near him lay the lute. He had dropped it in his excessive joy. He took it up, saying softly:

"Cousin, will you not sing for me one sweet song ere we part for so many long months? I may not have the pleasure again; for two days hence I start for London, in company with the Lord Lieutenant and Countess. I have but just made them my promise."

"My Lord, do you go so soon? I supposed that you would remain until we set sail."

"I would have done so, but—but—I have this night promised them, wishing—wishing to get away. Then you sail for Paris. I must return to Fleetwood now, and will return here day after to-morrow; then set out next day for London. I must fill my post at court. And if you were not going to Paris we should be separated anyway, for I reside in London again this year.

I will see you once more, the evening before my departure, if I may."

"Yes, ah yes, my Lord; but you will not think again, any more, that I love 'Simonides'?"

"No, darling, never; since you declare that you do not."

"You were willing to give me over to him."

"For your happiness, darling, only."

"I would not buy my happiness at the price of yours, my Lord."

"Oh, darling, you could make me so happy; but, never mind—I am happy anyway, now," he said, noting a sad change coming over her face; for her conscience smote her as she thought: I am giving him encouragement when I should not. That fatal promise, made in my thoughtlessness, like the sword of Damoclese, hangs over me, ready to destroy my every hope; and a feeling of hopelessness filled her soul. She took the lute; her fingers moved slowly from chord to chord, as if seeking some lost melody; then she began a languid lay, all sorrow laden, her soft theme with every note calling forth a wail, as from a broken heart. She touched her lute with exquisite delicacy, and sang softly thus:

Wonderful lute, wonderful lute,
Come to my soul's relief;
There's nothing now left for me—
Nothing but grief.

Chase away, chase away,
All signs of gladness.
Wonderful lute, wonderful lute,
All now is sadness.

Mournful lute, mournful lute,
Come to my relief at last;
Chase away, chase away,
Sweet memories now past,

Come, banish all lightness,
My bright hopes are fled;
Mournful lute, mournful lute,
My sad heart is dead.

"Richest love, sweetest love,
I mourn o'er thy pleasures;
Bitter woe, bitter woe,
Thine are my treas—."

Snatching the lute from her, he threw it on the ground, and, seizing her hands, he cried:

"Darling, you should not sing such sad refrains; they are not for such as you! Let joy, not sadness, fill your warm heart!"

She spoke not. The moon rose over the lake; its soft splendor, putting to shame the many twinkling lights among the shrubs and trees, threw a radiance over them, soothing their unquiet hearts into a softened rapture. She rose to go. Taking her hand, he imprinted upon it a burning kiss, then drew it within his arm, and they walked slowly up the garden path, his heart buoyant with hope; hers depressed.



CHAPTER XXV.

FAREWELLS.

"Farewell! and when the ocean wide
Hath parted us, as it must part,
One sigh will draw me to thy side;
One kiss will heal my broken heart!"

Now the moon, full-orbed, was shining, and, soaring up her pathway, shed on two upturned faces a silvery veil of light. Cooling zephyrs played among enchanting flowers, wafting rich odors to the pair of lovers seated beside a plashing fountain. The fall

of cool waters, gushing and flashing with rhythmic harmony, sparkled like a myriad of diamonds in the silver light. Her face was overshadowed by a look of softened sorrow; his radiant with a happiness he could not repress, although they were so soon to part. She loved him—had admitted it. He had been so wrought upon believing she loved his friend that now, having been assured of his mistake, he could not restrain his joy. Resting in the assurance of her love, he could now wait until such time as suited her to dismiss that something which distressed and held her from him. He was supremely happy. How fathomless was his love; how sublime his hope!

Her eyes, scintillating with Elysian fire, were turned on him as she said:

“My Lord, for every joy there is a sorrow——”

“Oh, my Lady; say not so, but, rather, for every sorrow there is unbounded joy—a compensation for all our sadness; a joyous compensation! Think; only two evenings ago at the Countess’ ball, how utterly miserable was I; how dejected! Thrown into the direst gloom, being misled.”

“And where was it you were going, my Lord; to the ends of the earth?”

“I had made up my mind to sail for America, India, or any other point, where I might die, and never more be heard from. But by your frank admission all my sorrow was suddenly turned into heavenly bliss——”

“It cannot last, my Lord.”

“Yes, darling, it must—it shall! Oh, do not turn thus so coldly from me, with that look of anguish I so often have seen on your sweet face.”

“Like the sunny apples of Istakhar, our love is a commingling of sweet and bitter,” she said sadly. Bells in the distance tolled the midnight hour. The Earl rose to go.

“I must go, now, darling. Farewell, my own true

love," he whispered, imprinting upon her hand a kiss; then one upon her burning cheek.

"A cousin's kiss," he said, as they turned to the veranda, whence came a mingling of voices in laughter and gay converse.

On one end of the veranda Louis and Rose stood, beneath a shadow of drooping woodbines, and thus they had spoken:

"So, Mr. Kearney, you leave to-morrow, with my Lord of Fleetwood."

"Yes, Miss Rosa; then you sail away to France, to remain for an interminable time. When shall I have the pleasure to see you again?"

"Possibly never, Mr. Kearney."

"Oh, say not so!"

"Yet I trust that I may live to return, do you not?"

"I devoutly wish you may, my little friend."

"I thank you, Mr. Kearney, for your devout wish; I shall return in one short year, or less."

"May I hope that you will not forget me, Rosa, during your long absence?"

"Forget you? Never!"

"In the meantime, may I not think of you as my little sweetheart?"

"Sweetheart? What's that?" she asked, appearing not to know, at the same time giving encouragement by a tender glance.

"Why—ah—one whom you love."

"Love! Oh! I do not know what that is. Then you—you——"

"I wish, at least, to call you sweetheart. May I not call you so?"

"Surely! I like it. It sounds very sweet. Then I may—someday—learn something about—love."

"I trust so, Rosa. Then, remember, while you are absent I will think of you as my sweetheart; and when you return I shall call you sweetheart."

"Oh, it is so interesting! Then you may, perhaps, call me so always."

"Truly? May I so? But, Rosa, little sweetheart, you flirted with Lord Phantomfell at Weirwolf. Did not he propose—offer you his heart and hand? And did you—surely you did not reject him?"

"Reject him? Yes, sir; I gave him a *coup de grace*."

"How could you reject him, Rosa? You gave him encouragement—every reason to hope. What said you, then; how consoled you him?"

"I said: 'My Lord, you will find a far more fitting mate in my sister, to whose tender graces I take pleasure in commending your Lordship.'"

"You are a cruel little coquette, sweetheart; but I see my Lord is taking leave, and I must follow. Farewell, then," he said, as he took her hand and gave it a hearty squeeze. "You will not forget me, Rosa?"

"Never, never, Mr. Kearney. Good-bye," she said.

The Earl had bidden farewell to his friends, and stood ready to depart, as Louis, emerged from the shadows at the end of the veranda, bade farewell to all, and followed his Lordship.



CHAPTER XXVI.

TO PARIS.

"When thou art nigh, it seems
A new creation round;
The sun hath fairer beams,
The lute a softer sound.
Tho' thee alone I see,
And hear alone thy sigh;
'Tis light, 'tis song to me,
'Tis all—when thou art nigh!"

Six months have passed since that sweet September night in Carlisle, when long farewells were spoken and lovers were forced to part. The wintry winds of March were blowing, and the frosty air is filled with snowflakes, while lowering clouds obscure the twinkling stars. We find the Earl of Fleetwood in the midst of the pleasures of a grand court ball, the crowd consisting of the very elite of the great metropolis. His Lordship was attired in superb court costume, for this was a state occasion, and there were gathered the peers of the United Kingdom in great ceremony, in their ample robes of scarlet cloth, adjusted on the right shoulder with splendid brooch and quartered with bands of ermine, each according to his rank, the Duke wearing four rows of ermine on his robe, the Marquis three and a half, the Earl three, the Viscount two and a half, the Baron two. Beneath these scarlet robes they wore square-cut coats, long-flapped waistcoat with pockets reaching to their tight stockings, which came very high, large hanging cuffs with much rich lace; many wore wigs with long curls, while others had assumed a new French style of side-tresses and cue, soft drooping moustachois, and broad, galoon-trimmed hats, turned up on one side, with feather.

Now, the Earl of Fleetwood, enjoying a conversation with the Baroness Brundridge, was saying: "May we not expect your Ladyship in North England next summer? It is long since we had the pleasure of seeing you at Hawdon Manor or Carlisle."

"Truly, my Lord, it is long since we visited the charming North Countrie, and I promise you I shall be delighted to get out among the mountains and lakes once more. There's no country like unto Cumberland, 'with its mists and multitudinous voices of hidden streams.'"

"And for hunting and fishing, your Ladyship must admit, there is no place comparable with it."

"True, my Lord. Oh, how happy; were it only possible to spend the rest of my days in that salubrious and most romantic country! But, my Lord, where have you been keeping yourself since last we met? I have not had the pleasure to see you since last year, in Paris, you remember—what a charming time we had at the Coronation—and next day in the Bois de Bologne, with the royal hunting party! How glorious you are in a chase, my Lord!"

"Your Ladyship, allow me to say you are something grand yourself."

"Uh, hu! hu! hu!" she laughed; "yes, owing to my size, no doubt. Come, my Lord, none of your flattery."

"May I not, then, offer you just praise in exchange for the flattery on which your Ladyship would wish to feed me?"

"I assure you, I am no flatterer, but your Lordship's most sincere friend—and, oh, my Lord, have you seen Virgil since his return from India? I declare, the boy runs about so that I cannot keep up with him——" But the Earl was interrupted, and had not time to respond to her inquiry, for a royal attendant approached, saying:

"A thousand pardons, my Lord, but His Majesty requests your attendance in his council chamber."

Turning to the Baroness, he said, excusing himself: "Dear Lady Hermione, I have received a summon from the King, and am forced to quit your most agreeable company; you will excuse me." He then followed the messenger to the King's presence.

In an ante-room he passed a group of courtiers, who were thronged around the King, and who spoke

pleasantly, yet looked wistfully after him as he passed on and found His Majesty in his council chamber.

Motioning away his attendants, the King received the Earl alone.

"My Lord Fleetwood," the King said, after the Earl had made his obeisance, "a messenger is to be dispatched at once to the Embassy in Paris. I have sent for you, knowing your loyalty to your King; besides, you have aforetime rendered us useful service, and so I felt that in calling on you to quit the ballroom, and set out at once on a hasty mission, I should not be denied; but find in your Lordship a trusty messenger." An expression of undisguised pleasure flashed over the Earl's face as he replied, gallantly:

"Your Majesty, I will gladly undertake the mission, with many thanks for your kind appreciation of my willingness to serve you, and assure you I will accomplish it in due time."

"But, my dear Lord, it is necessary that you set out at once, and, reaching Paris, you will have not a moment to tarry after you shall have received the burden of your mission, but hasten back at once, at the very earliest moment possible. Much, very much, depends on the dispatch with which you accomplish your mission. Your departure will be so abrupt, my Lord, that you will not have time to exchange your satin buskins for riding boots, nor your court dress for a more suitable equipment for traveling. A barge will sail in a few minutes, and, to expedite your return, you must board her at once. I would have given your Lordship this information sooner, but hesitated to draw you away from the joyous throng, where you appeared to be so happily engaged, but duty, my Lord, comes before pleasure."

"Happily engaged!" your Majesty; my happiness lies hence; even where you would send me, there

my heart is drawn by ties of the deepest devotion to one of the fairest and best!"

"Aha, my Lord, but unless you should have fair winds there will be no time for you to devote to Cupid's mission."

"I shall never loiter in your Majesty's service——"

"I have the utmost confidence in you, my Lord. The very reason I entrusted this important mission to you in preference to others is because I know that I can trust you. An' it were not for the great haste of the moment, I should make thee tell me all now; but you must go," the King said, slapping him familiarly on the shoulder as he continued, pleasantly: "Some other time will answer; you may have adverse winds and rough waters; you must go aboard now. But, remember, I am to be your confidante, my Lord."

"So you shall, your Majesty," returned his Lordship, as, with the easy grace of a courtier, he dropped on one knee and kissed His Majesty's hand; then, with a deep bow, he was ready to take his departure."

"Where is your heavy cloak, my Lord, to cover up your court dress?"

"In the ante-room, your Majesty; away beyond the dancing salon."

"Will your Lordship please to touch the bell?"

The Earl rang the bell; a man immediately entering from a side room, the King said:

"André, are the men and horses ready?"

"All ready, Sire, and waiting at the door."

"My Lord, André Ripon, here, will conduct you to the door, where you will find two men waiting with horses, who will attend you. Reach me my cloak, André, and assist me to adjust it on the shoulders of this manly fellow. There! Now allow me to clasp the buckle myself, my Lord, if you please; we will not take the time to fetch yours, but you will wear

this of mine; it is long, and will protect you completely."

The ample cloak, floating from his shoulders, fell from his fine form in rich folds to the floor.

"Take this," the King continued, thrusting into an inner pocket of the great cloak a packet of letters securely tied with a red ribbon. "Here are state papers, to be delivered by your hand into the hand of our Minister in Paris. Deliver this; then set out on your return as soon as you receive the reply. I trust you implicitly for promptness of action, my Lord. André will conduct you to a place where a boat lies at the mooring to take you and your attendants out to where a barge awaits you, ready to weigh anchor."

"Your Majesty, I am most willing to serve you, and am proud of your commendation and the trust reposed in me, and beg to assure you I will use all possible dispatch," the Earl said, kneeling. He kissed the King's hand, and was rising to depart, when the King laid a detaining hand on his arm and said:

"One moment yet, my Lord. In regard to the Captain's commission for young Arranton—it has been issued. He will receive it anon. And I can assure you further the matter of restoration, of which you spoke, is being looked into. The Duke of Hamilton and the Earl of Athole are both interested in it. I doubt not, my Lord, your request will be granted, and, mark me, any request or favor you shall prefer to me alone it shall be granted, I promise you. Remember, you go on an important mission. God grant thee speed, my boy. André, conduct His Lordship through the private room, behind the arras." André raised the rich tapestry of the Gobelines, the King pressed the hand of the Earl, and he passed out through a sumptuous apartment ornate with splendid mirrors and rich divans and fine china.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN PARIS.

"So warmly we met, and so fondly we parted,
That which was the sweeter, even I could not tell—
That first look of welcome her sunny eyes darted,
Or that tear of passion, which blessed our farewell.
To meet was a heaven, and to part thus another—
Our joy and our sorrow seemed rivals in bliss;
Oh! Cupid's two eyes are not liker each other,
In smiles and in tears, than that moment to this."

THE grand salon of the Hôtel de Dubois-Raymond presented a scene of entrancing beauty. Many proud and noble guests had been invited to attend a fête given in honor of the arrival of a distinguished and much-esteemed relative, General du Challette.

Many elegant ladies, superbly costumed, graced the occasion with their presence. There were shimmerings of rich silks, with billows of foamy lace, flashing of jewels and dark eyes; and tall plumes waving and nodding gracefully over soft and fluffy tresses.

Many noted men were here, whose fame had spread from nation to nation, and who controlled the destinies of kingdoms—mighty masters of the pen, staff officers in brilliant uniforms, men of wealth and men of genius, presenting an animated throng of the beauty and chivalry of the great French capital.

Brilliant lights threw a radiance over an ensemble of harmonious coloring, while from the orchestra rolled heavenly strains of melody. Amid this scene of surpassing splendor, leaning gracefully on the arm of a richly uniformed officer, was our Lady Kathryn, exquisitely gowned—the superb fit of her corsage, the graceful folds of her elegant pelisse displaying a queenly figure; a ruby worth a city's wealth flashed amid her dark-brown hair, her personality almost ob-

scured by her sumptuous toilette. Her beauty was bewildering. One season in Paris, where she had become darling of salon and ballroom, had made her a model of grace and elegance, envied for her beauty and pleasing address by many of the court beauties.

Kathryn and Captain le Blank had joined the promenade, conversing pleasantly, the young officer regarding her with undisguised admiration. Her cousins, daughters of Count Dubois-Raymond, followed on, with their escorts, chatting and laughing gaily.

Presently they ascended to a balcony, and were seated at small, round tables, which were sumptuously spread and attractively decorated with flowers and soft lights; and where was displayed the most exquisite cookery of France.

The revelry had continued until near the hour of midnight, when, at the farther end of the grand salon, Lady Kathryn and the young officer found a glorious seat in the deep embrasure of a window, amid a burst of tropical bloom and trailing tendrills of glossy foliage. Resting here after a long promenade amid the resplendent scenes of the thronged rooms, they watched the gay couples floating by them.

Anon, Kathryn beheld adown a long vista two elegantly groomed young men. Her heart quivered, then stood still; she almost swooned.

"Yes; it is the Earl of Fleetwood!"—or had her eyes deceived her—accompanied by her cousin, Viscount Berenger.

"It is; it is my Lord!" she thought, clasping her hands tightly, the blood leaving her face.

It was the Earl of Fleetwood, even more handsome than ever she had seen him, sumptuously attired in a brocaded suit, wearing a light court cloak of scarlet cloth, guarded with three bands of ermine, and wearing a court sword. She had never before seen him in court dress.

The Earl and Viscount walked and talked amid the dazzling throng, the Viscount introducing him to a number of his friends, but the Earl was impatient to get sight of his cousin Kathryn. Mingling with the throng, they soon found themselves nearing the end of the long room. Presently they drew quite near to the charming nook where sat Kathryn and Captain le Blank. The young officer spoke:

"Why, here is your cousin, the Viscount —— How is it, Berenger, you are late on this festive occasion?" he asked. Kathryn was in a tremor.

"Why, we were looking for you, Lady Kathryn, and would have passed you by, perhaps, you are so screened in amid the flowers," returned the Viscount. "Here is your cousin of Fleetwood, just from London. We have looked for you since we entered." Kathryn had risen. The Earl clasped her hand.

"Oh, my Lord," she said, "I am so glad to meet you—to see someone from home, and hear—and hear from them——"

"I am delighted to find you, my cousin, and assure you I will gladly give you all the news from home that I can, though I have not been to Fleetwood since you left, and have seen no one from that place."

The Viscount then introduced the officer, who greeted the Earl most cordially, saying:

"And now I perceive I must relinquish your Ladyship's most agreeable company in favor of his Lordship—this newly arrived cousin of yours, of whom you so much desire to have speech."

"Yes, yes! Come, now, Captain, we cannot allow you to monopolize our fair cousin, to the exclusion of all else, as you would doubtless most willingly do. Come with me." So saying, Berenger took the Captain's arm and, bowing low, they walked away, leaving the Earl and Kathryn to a *tete-a-tete* in this lovely niche, almost surrounded with choice exotics.

"Dear cousin," he said, "I am so glad to find you, having only a very few moments to spend in your sweet society."

"Oh, my Lord! How is it you cannot remain?"

"Dear cousin, think it not strange or anything unusual that I am here on a mission requiring great haste," he said, looking into her sweet eyes, which caused her face to flush beautifully. "I had, as agent for the King, cause for departing from London so abruptly that I had not time to exchange my court dress for a more suitable traveling equipment, but, enveloping myself in a long cloak, I left the court and started immediately for Paris; and, am sorry to say, must use as much dispatch in starting back. I arrived at the Embassy at eight o'clock this evening, after a hard day by stage, delivered some state papers, and will receive a reply at dawn to-morrow, when I shall set forth on my return. I felt I could not leave without seeing you, but could not, with propriety, leave the Embassy until after the banquet. I was nearly heartbroken, fearing it would be so late that I should be deprived of seeing you, but, fortunately, met your cousin Berenger, who is an old friend of mine, and spends most of his time in London, where he is a member of the diplomatic corps. I must say he is a noble young man and eminently fitted for diplomatic management. Hearing of my arrival at the Embassy, he hastened to me, and brought me here to meet you. After hearing of the fête I still might not have come, not being an invited guest, but he kindly remained with me until after His Excellency's banquet, promising I should see you."

"Oh, I could not live had you not come!" she exclaimed, impulsively, radiant with happiness.

"Yes, you wished to hear from your mother and friends at home," he replied, regarding her attentively.

"Oh, it is so delightful to meet—to meet one from home; so delightful to——" she paused, and, venturing to look up, she encountered his earnest, impassionate regard. She smiled benignantly, a soft pink bloom tingeing her cheeks.

"And can you not say that you are glad to see me, though I bring you no message from your friends?"

"I truly am, my Lord," she returned softly.

"I find myself most happy once more to be in your presence, though in so short time I must say good-bye. Meanwhile may we not promenade among the flowers?"

She assented, and, rising, he took her soft hand and placed it upon his arm. Leaving the lovely recess, he led her into the conservatory, where some others were wandering amid a scene of tropical luxuriance, sweetly contrasting with the wintry night outside. They strolled on in unalloyed happiness, Kathryn thinking:

"I will allow nothing to mar my delight at being with my dear Lord once more; nothing shall mar my happiness to-night; no remembrance of that which is unpleasant; that which is impossible. Nothing, nothing!" She smiled serenely. What blissful moment! As they chatted gaily they came to a bower well screened from all observing eyes. Here was a crimson sofa, closed in on every side with a bewildering array of snow-white blossoms, festooned with glossy foliage; and the fall "of fragrant waters gushing with cool sound from many a jasper fount is heard around." Waves of rich melody, rippled and floated to them, borne upon the fragrance-laden air. Here they paused, and he said softly: "I soon must leave you, cousin, and have brought you here to say farewell. I shall not see you perhaps again until you return home next summer. I shall have arranged for all of us a fine

outing for the last two weeks of August or the first of September. I feel sure you will enjoy it."

"Oh, yes, my Lord; so much! I must say you are always successful in arranging your pleasure parties—your hunting and fishing excursions I have not forgotten, my Lord—the glorious hunting we had in Weirwolf chase, if it had not been for the fearful rencounter in which your Lordship was so grievously wounded and had to suffer so much."

"Welcome be the memory of all my suffering, rather than one moment of bliss be forgotten. I had sweet compensation for all I suffered," he said, gallantly, his voice soft and reverent. "I found your good mother and your dear self such good nurses that I remember it only as a very great pleasure."

She rewarded him with a smile of unutterable sweetness. She had received him with so much apparent pleasure, and had conversed with him so much more unreservedly than heretofore that he was wildly happy. He felt that she had given him more encouragement than on any previous meeting, and manifested more pleasure in his society than ever before.

Consulting his repeater, he said:

"Sweet cousin, it is now time for my departure. I see a number of guests are taking leave. I must acknowledge I have just spent one of the happiest hours of my life."

"Oh, must you go?" she said. Her eyes were cast down; he could not read their telltale depths, but took her hand and, pressing it passionately to his lips, he said, with suppressed emotion:

"One word, darling; one word from your lips would complete my happiness! One word, darling, ere we part! Only say that you will be mine—one little whispered word. Say yes, sweetheart; speak comfort to my soul!" Waiting breathlessly for her reply, he

noted a deadly pallor overspreading her face. She looked up, with an agonized expression.

"I cannot! I cannot! I have promised!" she moaned, leaning heavily on his arm, her breath coming thick and fast. Fearing she would swoon, he drew her hastily to the sofa, saying:

"Shall we not sit here until you feel better?" He kissed her unresisting hand again and again, and, pressing it between his own, said:

"Forgive me, dearest, Lady Kathryn; forgive me! I would not cause you one moment of pain. I will go! I shall suffer, but could I feel assured of your happiness I should be content. My regard for you, fair cousin, makes me unwilling to do anything to grieve you."

"Oh, my Lord, I can never be happy again! That promise! That promise!" she murmured, in broken accents.

"Sweet friend, I should not have spoken again, since you had forbidden me. Oh, what cruel promise can keep you from me, dearest? You will explain to me some time, will you not? But I leave you now, dearest cousin. Farewell, farewell! Shall I take you to your friends or leave you here alone?"

"Leave me; leave me here!" she cried, in a paroxysm of emotion. "I am perfectly at home here, and shall take care of myself."

He pressed her hand, then stooping, imprinted a kiss upon her pale cheek. She was near swooning, but stoutly resisted until he was out of sight, then dropped back in the arm of the sofa in a dead faint.

As the Earl entered the ballroom he found the guests departing. Making his adieux to the host and hostess, who made strenuous efforts to detain him over night, he passed out of the room and met the Viscount in an ante-chamber, where he had left his heavy cloak.

"Berenger," he said, in a husky voice, "pray go to your cousin immediately. I left her in the conservatory—in the east side, near a fountain. I fear she is feeling badly. And, oh Berenger, be sure to meet me in the morning, ere I leave; you know the hour."

Berenger promised, pressing his hand warmly, for they were not only the warmest of friends, but confidantes.

Marie and two other maids had been standing on a side veranda, in the moonlight, watching the departing guests as they entered their coaches and were whirled away down the streets, and now, entering the conservatory by way of a revolving window, came suddenly upon Lady Kathryn pale as death, leaning stiffly against the back of the sofa, her face against the deep crimson plush, white as alabaster.

"Mon Dieu! qu' est-il arrive?" cried one, on seeing her.

"Oh, *Ciel!* Miladi, she has fainted!" cried Marie, as she sprang to her assistance. "Here, Therressa—Jeanne—take dees leetle moushoir and dib it in the jet-d'eau and giff id here, quickly—ah, mafoi——"

"Ma chere enfant!" cried another.

Berenger hastened to the conservatory, as requested by the Earl, and, rushing to the fountain, heard these exclamations. He sprang at once to her side, and, bathing her face in the silvery dews from the fountain, she was soon restored to consciousness, after which he led her to his sister's, who conducted her to her own apartments.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY HAWREN AND THE SPINNERS—A PROPOSAL.

"I will the distaff hold,
Come thou and spin."

"Now nearly fled was sunset's light,
Leaving but as much of its beam
As gave to objects, late so bright,
The coloring of a shadowy dream!
And there was still where day had set,
A flush that spoke him loth to die—
A last link of his glory yet,
Binding together Earth and Sky."

THREE months later, on a balmy evening in June, Lady Hawren sat in a bartizan window-seat with her maids around her, busily engaged with a piece of fine embroidery, while the maids and Mrs. Macleod were engaged in work of different kinds. The little treadle-wheels buzzed in a charming manner; the reels clicked off the cuts of fine-spun yarns; the steady bang! bang! of looms, in an adjoining room, was heard. Mrs. Macleod sat near, winding a ball from three broaches of thread that danced and capered about in a basin at her feet. Lady Hawren, starting up, exclaimed:

"I declare, the droning sound from the buzzing wheels has nearly put me asleep!"

"My Lady should get out in the open air," observed Mrs. Macleod. "Your Ladyship is not looking so well as usual. You grieve for your daughter, my Lady."

"Oh, Mrs. Macleod, she has been away so long, and the mail packets are so irregular. Here I have two letters from her to-day—one written the first of April; the other is of much more recent date."

"And she will soon be coming home, now, my Lady?"

"Yes, in one or more months. She thinks she will arrive some time in August."

"His Lordship, the Earl, will also return in August—the latter part of the month, I think."

"Oh, yes. In the letter first written Kathryn speaks of his having been in Paris, on a rather short visit,

I think, as she saw him only for a few moments. My Lord intends taking us to the old castle on the sea-side for a few weeks when he returns, so he says in his last letter. What of the old castle, and where is it, Mrs. Macleod?"

"It is situated on the Solway Firth, about fifteen miles distant, my Lady, and was formerly, many years ago, the home and stronghold of some of my Lord's ancestors. Though almost in ruins now, some parts of the more modern additions are in a good state of preservation; insomuch that it will make a pretty good summer abode for a small party during a stay of a few weeks."

"The Earl is very considerate to undertake so much for our pleasure, and I do appreciate his goodness much. But, oh, if Kathryn may only return to us in safety I shall be happy enough anywhere!"

"Dear Lady, I know 'tis hard, this separation from an only child. I have never for a day been separated from Flora, and feel that I can never live away from her."

"Kathryn will be glad to return to us. Only listen while I read from her letter. She is with my uncle's family, now in the country, in his grand chateau. 'How delighted I am with Paris! And yet I long to be at Fleetwood once more; to be with you, my mother! I shall never leave you again. Our uncle, aunt and cousins have been delightfully sweet to me, yet no one can fill the place of mother. All have shown me the greatest courtesy, taking me everywhere, for they have entree into the very best circles in Paris. We have been here in the chateau one month, and it is the dearest place—save Fleetwood Castle. Berenger, the Viscount, comes home now, and then, and oh, he is so jolly! We romp all over the grand old place, then drive or ride in the nicest forest. I have not been separated from the girls,

even for a day, since I came, and they are still the same sweet, dear creatures they were on our first meeting. Am arranging to come home; will sail with Lord and Lady de Bruce and the young ladies the middle of next month. If we have fair wind and weather, hope to reach Carlisle about the first week in August—in ample time for the delightful outing the Earl is planning, of which you made mention in your last letter, and of which he spoke to me while here for a brief hour’—— It seems, Mrs. Macleod, that his visit to Paris was but brief—— What a fairy place is Paris, mother—bright and gay! How lively the people, as they hurry along the broad boulevards or sit eating and chatting at the little tables on the pavement outside the restaurants. The day before leaving Paris my cousins and I spent some hours in the charming pleasure garden in the Champs Elysees, and had a fine dash through the Bois de Boulogne. How fine the marble statues, the sparkling fountains in the Place de la Concorde! France! Sunny France! How I love dear, sunny France! En route to the chateau we passed a village where the people were celebrating St. Anne’s day with a feast; all gaily dressed. There was a procession of children and nuns, headed by the village priest, who manifested much respect as my uncle’s equipage passed by them.’ ”

While thus Lady Hawren was engaged in reading to Mrs. Macleod Kathryn’s letter, Flora sat in the study pouring over a book. She and Annie had been practicing a duet. Now Annie sat in “Lady Margaret’s boudoir” strumming on the spinnet; now and then her voice joined with the chords in a lonely manner, as if *ennuyé*. Rising, she stepped outside in the long colonnade and, turning suddenly, she saw Mr. Brignol stand beside the old rosebush, just where he had stood on their first meeting. She paused suddenly, saying:

"Oh, Mr. Brignol; this reminds me of our first meeting."

"Miss Hamilton, do you remember that occasion?"

"Yes, sir; I do. And must say I recall it with shame and mortification."

"Why should it shame you to think of it? Will you not come down and let us wander in the garden while you shall tell me?"

"Tell you, indeed! I should think you knew enough of it already."

"No, no! I do not. Come, let us go where 'The winking mary-buds begin to ope their eyes, and we'll find a bank whereon the wild thyme blows, Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows; quite over-canopied with lush woodbine, With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.'"

"Irresistible!" she exclaimed. He continued:

"Now the resplendant sun is sinking in the west
——"

"Truly, Mr. Brignol—in the west?" she returned, in a bantering way.

"Bathing the—the—scenery—the surroundings—that is, the garden—— Miss Hamilton, your bit of irony has confused my extemporizing sense—— in a sea of glory," he concluded.

"How enticing! Resistance is no longer possible. I feel that I must come." She held out her hands to him. He ran lightly up the steps and gallantly led her down, and drew her hand within his arm. They walked a little way in silence, then he said:

"You must have taken me for someone else."

"Yes; I took you to be the Baron of Weirwolf," she returned, "and we had all been made to believe him a most fearful villain—a perfect outlaw, and
——"

"I looked like one, no doubt," he said. She smiled up in his face and continued;

"And strict orders had been given every one to not permit him to enter; for, should he gain access to the Earl's room, he—the old Earl—would be instantly and foully murdered before our very eyes."

"'Twas my Lord Graeme who made this impression?"

"'Twas he made us believe my Lord Clifton a perfect monster. Yes! He kept four of his own men stationed in the great hall; some were in the courtyard, and others—oh, everywhere. We lived in perfect terror lest his Lordship of Weirwolf should force an entrance and dispatch the noble old Earl of Fleetwood, and possibly all the rest of us. I now perceive his Lordship has been horribly maligned. As we ladies were occupying Lady Margaret's suite of apartments, just at the entrance from the back courtyard—Madame was teaching the young ladies there—Lord Graeme put us on our guard not to allow anyone to pass, or let it be known should anyone attempt to pass in."

"Lord Graeme laid his plans deep. He gained something, but not all he had hoped for," said Guy. They now reached the bower, and, seating them upon a rustic seat, he said:

"Yes; I well remember our first meeting."

"Indeed! You must have thought me a bold and fiery young lady."

"I cannot say that I did."

"I dare say you would not tell me what you thought and said about me," she said, jestingly.

"I only wish that I had courage—that I dared tell you. His Lordship could tell you what I said, and I would be glad to have you know what I thought of you."

"Surely no one could tell it better than yourself, Mr. Brignol. "You know what kind of an impression you had of me, and just what you said to the Earl

about me. Truly, if you are willing that I should know, you could tell it yourself."

"Really, Miss Hamilton, I fear you would not like to have me repeat it."

"Then you must certainly have said something disagreeable of me."

"I protest! I never did; but said of you just what I still think."

"And what is that, Mr. Brignol?"

"You will not be angry?"

"Possibly not. Oh, tell me; what was it?"

"That you were the—the most magnificent and charming of women."

"No; fie, fie, now, Mr. Brignol. I am sure you thought nor said anything of the kind."

"Indeed I did, though; and can truly say I still think so. And I said your voice——"

"Well, what of my voice?"

"That you had a charming voice, that 'came o'er my ear like the sweet south wind that breathes upon a bank of violets, stealing and giving odor.'"

"No, no! Did you, then, say such sweet things? What else? Pray, what more said you?" she asked, eagerly. "Remember all you thought and said then you adhere to now."

"Yes; oh yes! I do avow it! I said you were queenly in your indignation."

"Did I indeed look queenly?"

"You did."

"Pray, proceed."

"That you had tresses dark as midnight, eyes like a raven's wing——"

"Ah!"

"——and lips, ruby lips, that were made to—— made for——" He paused, gazing into her eyes.

"There! You cannot say that you still adhere to all this, Mr. Brignol."

"I do affirm it."

"You are trying to tease me, and have almost succeeded in your effort."

"Never! Never! I was never more earnest, and can add even more now than I then thought and said, but fear 'twill vex thy soul to hear that I would speak."

"Pray, what more now can you say? You have exhausted your vocabulary on beauty."

"Truly, then, I can take up another subject."

"What subject, pray?"

"That of love."

"Indeed! What can you say on that subject?" she asked, a little flurried.

"May I tell you all?"

"Yes; tell me."

"And you will not resent it?" he asked, eagerly.

"Surely not; if you really mean it," she replied softly, with downcast eyes.

"Mean it? I do mean it! I love you, Annie!"

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Brignol? How long will your love last?"

"There is no doubt about it. Last?"

'Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom!
And is an ever fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.'

"Annie, I have loved you from the very first. Now, are you angry?"

"No, sir. On the contrary, I am very happy."

"Then dare I hope that you will, some day, reward me with your love?"

"Hope nothing of the kind; look not to the future
——"

"Not hope, Annie? What then, am I to do?" he cried in dismay. But, catching a merry twinkle in

her eye, he asked, anxiously: "What, then, may I hope or believe? Tell me true."

"Hope that I love you now! Believe that you do *now* possess all my love."

"Dare I? Oh, dare I hope so much? Noble creature, dearest of all! And may I hope that you will be mine—my very own?" possessing himself of her hand and giving it a tender pressure.

"Oh, yes," she murmured softly, as he ventured to encircle her waist with his arm, and asked tenderly:

"Then shall we not soon wed, sweet Annie; my own?"

"Not soon."

"Yes, yes! Oh, yes!"

"'Before the hoary-headed frosts shall
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,'
We shall wedded be."

"There now, you are hasty, sir; not before Christmas—or October, to say the very least!"

"Then, dearest, must I so long wait? Haply, in the meantime, I will

"Think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth—sings hymns, at Heaven's gate,
bethinking on our wedded love."



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OLD CASTLE.

"Without a ruin; broken, tangled, cumbrous.
Within it was a little paradise."

THE ruins of an old castle, built in a remote period, situated on a slight promontory reaching out into the Solway Firth, insomuch that the sea lay on two sides

of it, were exceedingly picturesque and interesting, having once been a Danish fortress or stronghold. Then a famous monastic seat, where stood the "wonderful old stone church, erected by St. Minian, in the dim and shadowy twilight of the introduction of Christianity." And afterwards, for many years and generations, the princely residence of the noble ancestors of the Cliftons. The original structure had been almost demolished, then rebuilt and added to from time to time to meet the demands of its inhabitants, but still rested upon its original foundation, and exhibited many incongruities in its massive architecture. A large, square tower still stood amid the crumbling walls. There were fragmentary remains of other edifices also, which had been enclosed within one outer wall of great circuit. The many additions which had been made to the old castle gave to it a combination of early Roman and Gothic styles. Of the ruinous portion, survived the aforesaid square tower and the crumbling walls of the west wing, with its subterraneous basements or vaults. There were great arches, long windows, stair steps and decayed walls of rugged gray stone—all ivy-grown—presenting a remarkably romantic appearance.

The walls of the stone church or chapel, with shafted windows, stood between the castle and the sea, on the north—on the very brink—and even appeared to be pending over the turgid waters of the arm of the sea that rolled below. In the more modern, or inhabitable, portion of the castle, on the south and east, was found room enough to comfortably house all the persons of quality and immediate attendants. The servants, in preference to the basement rooms, where, it was said, ghosts had been seen to stalk abroad, took quarters in tents, while yet others took shelter beneath large trees. On the west there was a gentle slope towards the sea, covered with fine trees,

lovely groves, lichens, firs and creepers, with broad vistas leading among shrubs and jungles of flowers, to the sandy beach. Where once had been a gate in front of the great hall, two huge old beech trees stood in most friendly relation, inclining toward each other their branches interlaced overhead. Beneath, the greensward was smooth and soft as a carpet of velvet. Here rustic seats of various kinds had been arranged for the comfort and pleasure of the guests.

It was evening hour. The sun was sinking down toward the sea, soon to leave all in mellow twilight. The men had gathered beneath the old trees, and there sat resting from the hurried trip from Fleetwood, which had been made since noon, discussing religion and politics, Reverend Mr. Galbraith, the visiting clergyman, discussing agreeably with Mr. Hayston. Within the entrance hall sat a group of ladies, but the restless damsels or nymphs, as they now preferred to call themselves, had strolled forth from the romantic ruins toward the seaside, where soon they were joined by Rorey and Julien. They were charmed to find a lovely glade, where flowed a little fountain gushing from beneath a hard rock. Here they warbled in cadences, soft and low, some snatches of song, while culling bright flowers along the rippling streamlet. The murmur of merry voices and happy laughter were wafted on the gentle breeze to the group seated in the shadow beneath the great trees; also to those in doors.

"How happy they are," said Mrs. O'Neal, for at her nephew's urgent request she and Nora had come from Edinburgh to spend some months with Lady Hawren and Kathryn.

"Yes, yes," said Lady de Bruce; "how very considerate of the Earl to arrange such a nice treat for us all. I feel sure it will do me much good, this outing on the seaside."

"I feel that I shall be much benefited myself, after having been shut up in Edinburgh for so long a time," replied Mrs. O'Neal.

"Indeed!" said Lady Hawren, "the Earl is the most considerate person I ever knew. He arrived from London only last week, and after spending but two days with us set out for Solway Moss, where the Lord Lieutenant had just stationed my nephew, Captain Arranton, with a body of soldiers, to keep down the smugglers, who are getting very troublesome along the coast, to procure leave of absence and fetch him whom Kathryn and I have not seen since we left America—to see us, and spend the time we are here with us, only arriving, as you know, ladies, just in time to lunch with us and join our party hither; saying to me as we were about starting: 'What a blessing, dear aunt, to be enabled once again to breathe the fresh air of field and forest for some weeks of the summer.' He is charmed to get back once more. The servants have for two weeks been busy decking up this old deserted castle for our pleasure and comfort."

"It is his good breeding that inculcates self-denial or consideration for others. He is the personification of civility and charity," said Lady de Bruce.

"I assure you, he has made quite a success of it, for everything appears to be perfectly arranged for the comfort of all," observed Mrs. O'Neal.

"How thoughtful, too," said Lady Hawren; "he has had the ladies' apartments arranged on the first floor, saying it would be easier on them not to have the long stairways to climb."

"That was indeed thoughtful of him, was it not, Mary?" returned Lady de Bruce.

"Indeed, yes; since we are here for a rest, it seems just the thing," replied Mrs. O'Neal.

"True!" exclaimed Lady Hawren. "We will all be just here together, and never have to go upstairs for anything; adjacent to the library and sitting-room. He has had choice books placed here for the comfort of those who would pass a little time in reading. Only peep in the library here, ladies, and satisfy yourselves of its cosiness," said Lady Hawren, as she rose and lifted the drapery. The other women stepped in the room and admired the arrangement—the long rows of shelves containing many handsome and useful volumes, brought from the library at Fleetwood. A library table stood in the centre of the room; a comfortable crimson velvet sofa was stationed near a window; and there were chairs and other articles for the comfort of the ladies. The floor was covered with robes or skins of soft fur. Now they pass into the drawing-room, nothing intervening save the handsome Persian drapery. This room was carpeted with a Persian rug and supplied with table, chairs, sofas and many soft and beautiful Oriental cushions.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lady de Bruce, "here is everything desirable for a two weeks' sojourn at the seaside."

"Now," said Lady Hawren, "we will look into the temporary bedrooms, which his Lordship has had prepared in this old building for us."

On the right of the drawing-room, partitioned off by hangings only, was a suite of three rooms—two of these had been furnished as bedrooms, the other as a dressing-room, between them, to serve the occupants of both rooms.

"This suite is for the use of Lady Hawren and her daughter," explained Mrs. Macleod, who had now joined them, and who had preceded them to the old castle several days, that she might superintend the arranging of the rooms. "And now, Lady de Bruce, I will take pleasure in showing you and Mrs. O'Neal the rooms which have been arranged and set aside

for you on the opposite side of the hall." And she led them across the hall, where by the aid of rich tapestry four suites of three rooms each had been created in a great old hall, possibly in former times a banquetting hall. The first suite from the entrance hall had been set apart for Lord and Lady de Bruce; the second, for the Misses Bruneau and Miss Hamilton; the third, for Mrs. O'Neal and Nora; while the fourth was intended for Mrs. MacLeod and Flora.

"His Lordship gave directions for all this arrangement himself. He came by on his way to Solway Moss and stopped to see that all things had been done according to his orders, was well pleased, and pointed out the suite for each couple," said Mrs. Macleod.

"How very kind and thoughtful of him," said Lady de Bruce.

They next came to an open corridor, leading out to the ruinous portion of the old castle; at the left of this they peered into the temporary dining-hall, luxuriously hung with old tapestry and fitted up sumptuously. Still farther to their left, in the end of the great hall, was a collection of arms and accoutrements for the chase, or protection against outlaws or thieves. There hung buff coats and broadswords, pistols and sporting arms, as well as some more formidable looking warlike pieces.

"The cooking is all done in a basement below the dining-hall," continued Mrs. Macleod. "There is none of the ruinous portion of the old castle in use; that lies on the north and west of the inhabitable part. The clergymen and the young men are well provided for upstairs."

After this tour of inspection the ladies returned and sat in the hall, which had an east front, looking out on the great beech trees, under which sat the men. Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal sat together on a sofa in a most friendly relation, arms entwined about

each other's waist. Mrs. O'Neal had recently come from Edinburgh to Carlisle, and had accompanied Lord de Bruce's family to the old castle.

"You, Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal have long been friends, I suppose," observed Lady Hawren, seating herself opposite them.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" replied Lady de Bruce, with a deep sigh—"one who proves herself a friend in time of affliction and great need is truly a friend, and such has Mary O'Neal proven herself to me."

"Then, you, Lady de Bruce, as well as the most of us, know what affliction is, and have suffered from its inexorable hand."

"Yea, Lady Hawren; but few have been called to undergo such an affliction as was forced upon me seventeen years ago—is it not, Mary?—since my little Marjorie was lost to me?"

"Eighteen, my dear friend; it was very soon after my marriage when you sent for me and Lieutenant O'Neal to come to you in your distress. We were strangers then, but were thrown together in such a manner as to become the fastest friends, Lady Hawren," said Mrs. O'Neal.

"How lost, Lady de Bruce—your child lost—by death?" asked Lady Hawren, sympathetically.

"No, Lady Hawren! Stolen from my fond embrace, to be carried away among strangers, we know not whither."

"Oh," cried Lady Hawren, "worse than death!"

"Ah, my Lady; worse than death!" echoed Lady de Bruce sadly.

"Lieutenant O'Neal and I had but recently married, and he, being in command of a company in Colonel Lord de Bruce's regiment, was stationed near the place where Lady de Bruce was then residing, on the coast of Ayrshire," said Mrs. O'Neal. "I went immediately to her, and Lieutenant O'Neal, with a

company, went to capture, if possible, a band of gypsies, or smugglers, and find the child. I remained with her two months, while they scoured the country, to no avail; the child was never found. A pirate's vessel, or one taken for such, had left the coast just at the time the child disappeared, and it was thought most probable they had taken her."

"No reason for such villainy could ever be surmised," said Lady de Bruce, unless it was intended to extort ransom, but we never heard aught of it. The search was kept up for years, but to no avail.

At this juncture Captain Arranton entered. Our Edwin, for it was he, had grown tall and handsome, wearing a sparkling uniform, military boots, a sword clanking at his heels, a slight moustache, his dark hair neatly tied in a queue with a blue ribbon, carrying in his hand a broad hat with feather. He had been granted a Captain's commission and placed by the Lord Lieutenant in command of a company of reserve militia at Solway Moss, headquarters of coast defense against smugglers, who were becoming very bold in this region. Beyond a doubt the Earl of Fleetwood had a hand in placing him here.

Bowing to the ladies, whom he had already met, having that morning accompanied Mrs. O'Neal and Lady de Bruce from Carlisle, and lunched with them after arriving at Fleetwood, where they remained only a short time before starting to the old castle, he took a seat beside his aunt. The ladies appearing sad, he tried to cheer them, then sat listening to the nymphs as they warbled a song or strayed in happy converse and laughter. Suddenly, "as rosy eve fell o'er the blushing wave," there came from out the dark ruins a low, sweet song, for one of the fair nymphs alone had strayed amid those ruins, and in great delight at beholding the golden sunset over the sea, for-

got all else and the melody of her rich voice rose softly in an evening hymn.

"Surely," cried Lady Hawren, as they listened intently, "surely these old minstrel halls, which for long ages have slumbered, have awakened to life again!"

"I thought the nymphs were all in the wood?" said Lady de Bruce.

"It seems that one of them, at least, has strayed amid the ruins," observed Mrs. O'Neal. Captain Arranton rose, saying:

"Methinks I will even now seek out this one who warbles so well and sweetly 'mid the growing shadows. Hers must, indeed, be a bold spirit to wander thus alone amid the ghostly ruins. I shall at least endeavor to explore this classic abode and discover, if possible, the sweet siren who pours forth her soul in such rich and melodious strain." He walked manfully down the long hall, then, turning to his right, betook him down the long stone corridor leading to the ruins.

Two pairs of eyes followed the young Captain, expressive of much interest, respectively—one regarding him anxiously, the other with a look of gratified pride.

"Flora did not go with the other girls, Mrs. Macleod?" asked Lady Hawren, anxiously.

"I believe not, my Lady, for that is her voice, I perceive," replied Mrs. Macleod.

"She loves solitude, perhaps," remarked Lady de Bruce.

"At least, my Lady, she has been forced to endure much of it," returned Mrs. Macleod.

"Until it may have become habitual," observed Mrs. O'Neal.

Flora, instead of going with the other young ladies, had strayed alone down the corridor to a ruinous hall, with broken-down walls, overlooking the sea.

Here, charmed with the glorious sunset, all else forgotten, she warbled her gentle lay.

Captain Arranton, proceeding down the rough stone corridor, charmed with the sweet strain, gliding with alacrity in the direction whence it came, very soon had a view of the fair singer. He paused to observe her while his mental ejaculations ran thus:

"Ye Gods! St. Cecilia robed in white! What a vision of beauty! Spirit or human? Ethereal beauty; fair, golden-haired! Virgin of Heaven!"

She stood, leaning on a broken column, looking over the main—a creature of graceful form and superior beauty. As the last notes of that sweet hymn to the dying day fell on his ear, Captain Arranton approached. A heaven-lent glory shone over the landscape. Evening never looked serenely upon a more calm and lovely scene. His sabre striking against a stone, rang out clearly. Quickly she turned, with a startled look. Doffing his gold-laced military hat, he made a courtly bow. She curtsied, and drew back against the crumbling wall, covered with a mass of blooming flowers and glossy foliage, which dropped in warm cascades of glowing color about the lovely white-gowned figure.

"Juno or Hebe? What goddess have we here?" he asked, approaching nearer.

"My name is Flora, sir," she said, simply, in a voice soft and low as the purling brooklet.

"Ah, the goddess of flowers; quite appropriate—noting the crimson trumpet-flowers floating caressingly over her head, as she shrank still further amid the rank ramblers. "I knew 'twas some diety, and felt I should kneel and render divine honors. Watch you here for bright Hesperus to make his appearance? Or mayhap you have a lover on board yon little brig-like barque that for some hours past has lurked

upon the hushed waters." She blushed vividly, saying:

"I have no lover, sir!"

"No lover, fair one! Then it shall be my gentle office to seek one for you. Pray, come out from amid the flowers and lean upon my arm while we, promenading, shall survey the length and breadth of this vast and ancient hall, where none but Fays and Nymphs for years have trode."

She came, shyly, out from the leafy screen, and, leaning upon his arm, they began to pace slowly up and down the flagged floor.

"I believe you were among the group of young ladies to whom I had the pleasure of being presented this morning in the great hall at Fleetwood, on my arrival at the castle? But you will pardon me when I admit that, being ushered into the presence of so many fair ones, all at once, I became so confused as not to remember your name."

"My name, Captain Arranton, is Flora Macleod," she returned.

"Ah, Miss Macleod, then I have had conferred on me the great pleasure of the acquaintance of one whose praises have oft to me been sung," he said, courteously.

"Ah! Pray, Captain Arranton, who has so kindly spoken to you in commendation of one so undeserving as myself?" she asked modestly.

"I have never, Miss Macleod, received a letter from my fair Cousin Kathryn, in which she has failed to mention her 'darling friend Flora' in the fondest eulogy, and I must admit her encomiums have awakened within my heart the greatest desire to meet one who has thus been described to me in such glowing colors."

"I much fear, Captain Arranton, that my friend, Lady Kathryn, has done me an injustice to awaken

expectations that can never be realized but must lead to disappointment."

"Not realized! Methinks, Miss Macleod, that I can justly quote the words of the Queen of Sheba to the great King Solomon: 'The half was never told me!' You will pardon me for saying it, Flo—Miss Macleod. Oh, that I might call you Flora!" he said tenderly.

"I'm sure you may, Captain Arranton; it is the only name I have been accustomed to of late, and I prefer it."

"Of late! Pray, what were you formerly called?"

"I must decline to tell you now, Captain; but may tell you sometime, when we are better acquainted."

"Oh, I daresay 'tis some sweet love name! And you will tell me sometime?"

"Yes, sir; perhaps."

"No! No perhaps; no uncertainty! I must know it, sometime. Will you not promise me it shall be so?"

"Yes, sir; I promise," she said, with a bewildering smile.

"Thank you, Flora," he said, with a courtly bow; "a downright promise, without condition; I like that."

Amid the hanging foliage that perfumed the walls they paused, and, looking out over the sea, beheld a witching little isle, bathed in the gentle twilight, where a few tall trees lifted their leafy heads amid the rifling clouds. The moon, only a few evenings old, was smiling through the branches, and vying with gentle twilight for an undisputed ascendancy.

"Shall we not go boating sometime to yon lovely little isle?" he asked.

"Perhaps," she said demurely.

"Oh, say 'sometime'!"

"Sometime," she repeated, with a charming naïveté.

"Oh, that glorious 'sometime'; what happiness it holds for me!" he exclaimed, smiling on her beaming

face. And now they see the nymphs returning, flower-laden, from the glen, and heard the murmuring of soft voices in the distance; and mingling with the soft notes of a lute, Louis' voice rose in song on the balmy air, for he and Guy had soon joined the straying nymphs in the flowery glen. Louis sings:

"Naiads, Nereids, Nymphs and fountains,
Goddesses of groves and mountains,
Fair and sable, great and small
Yes! I swear I love them all!
Soon was ever passion over,
I was but the moment's lover;
Oh! I'm such a roving elf,
That the queen of love herself,
Tho' she practiced all her wiles,
Rosy blushes, wreathed smiles,
All her beauty's proud endeavor
Could not chain my heart forever."

Hearing dinner announced, Flora murmured gently:
"Let us go."

"How can I leave this charming retreat, where I have been so happy?" he returned.

Reaching the great hall, where all had now gathered, he led her to a sofa, and would have seated himself beside her; but, making him a curtsy, she ran away among the nymphs to see their flowers.

Lady Hawren was arranging the couples for the dining room, and did not observe their entrance. Lord Phantomfell permitted no arrangement to thwart his determination to escort Lady Hawren, herself, on every occasion. For since he had been rejected by Miss Bruneau, and also by Rosa, he had transferred his most ardent affections to Lady Hawren, to whom, he declared to Louis, he had never seen any lady comparable in beauty, elegance or refinement; and in age she would just suit his requirements, he being a bachelor of thirty; and he would not be persuaded that she was a day over that most desirable age.

Somehow Lady Hawren managed to have Edwin attend Miss Bruneau to dinner.

After dinner had been enjoyed by the hungry party, they determined to spend the first evening rambling among the ruins, as the moon was high overhead and would continue to shine until full midnight; and many of the old walls had fallen away, leaving the smooth stone floor open to the moonlight, affording a fine place for promenading.



CHAPTER XXX.

THE GHOST.

"'Tis at such a time and hour,
Wizzard, witch and fiend have power;
And ghostly forms, thro' mist and shower,
Gleam on the gifted ken."

Now all had gathered on the flagged floor, where Edwin and Flora had first met, only a few hours before. Lord Phantomfell had sauntered off with Miss Bruneau. Annie and Guy stood near a crumbling wall, looking over the sea. Nora, who was now grown to be almost a young lady; Rorey, Rosa and Julien, took hands and darted about hither and thither, Louis vainly trying to keep pace with them. Kathryn and her dear friend Flora were hanging on the arms of Captain Arranton, while the other ladies, Lord de Bruce, the Earl, the clergyman, Mrs. Macleod, the maids, and some of the attendants, formed an interesting and interested group. Now Annie stands upon the brink of a ruined wall, the better to view the little isle. Guy, holding her hand lest she should fall, quotes:

"Night, sable goddess from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty now stretches forth her laden sceptre
O'er a slumbering world!"

"Mr. Brignol! What an inappropriate quotation!" exclaimed Annie. "Behold the bright-faced moon, beaming benignant upon us, dispelling the sable-mantled Queen——"

"Methinks," said Louis, approaching them, "there are here some ghostly manifestations."

"Why, Mr. Kearney; you must be a firm believer in ghosts! Saw you ever one?" asked Annie.

"Never, Miss Annie." The trio now coming up, Kathryn asked:

"What would you do, Louis, should some gaunt and fiery-eyed spectre appear from yon dark recess behind the broken wall?"

"'From elves, hobs and fairies defend us, good Heaven!'" quoted Louis.

The Earl now joins the group, with Lord Phantomfell and Miss Augusta Bruneau. Kathryn, still clinging to Edwin's arm, asks of the Earl:

"My Lord, have you ever seen a ghost?"

"No, my Lady; but I have been where, it is said, unhallowed spirits with many a shriek and cry, rush undisturbed through dark and deserted chambers."

"Humph! Damme!" said Phantomfell, taking snuff.

"Oh, my Lord, tell us of it!" cried Kathryn.

"Yes, my Lord," said Flora; "and did not you see one?"

"No, I did not, Flora; had I been permitted to see one, then might I tell you a true ghost story. Howbeit, I will relate to you thus much of one: I once visited the old castle of Holm Peel on the Isle of Man, where the Earl of Warwick had once been confined; and here, too, Eleanor, wife of the Duke of Gloucester, spent the last days of her banishment. The sentinels told us that her discontented spirit—her spectre—was often seen at midnight, walking about the battlements, standing beside a solitary turret, or on a broken wall—

as Miss Hamilton now stands—but always vanished at cock crow——”

With a little shriek Annie bounded from her position on the wall.

“My Lord,” she cried, “who would ever think of *you* trying to frighten a lady so!” And Louis chimed in:

“’Tis now the very witching time of night, when churchyard yawns!

Some howl, some yell——’”

“Oh-oo, Louis! How you terrify me!” cried Kathryn. Flora and Miss Augusta shrieked. Lord Phantomfell took a pinch of snuff from his jeweled snuff-box. Annie said:

“I feel they glance from every dark corner and crevice of these old and ruined walls.”

“Humph!” continued Phantomfell. “Humph! Only think of it; afraid of a shadow! Damme!”

“Captain Arranton,” said the Earl, “allow me to relieve you of one of your friends. I will assist you in protecting the timid ones amid these ghostly surroundings. Lady Kathryn, if you will but lean upon my arm I will take the utmost pleasure in protecting you from the fiery-eyed spectre, and show you all the beauties of this splendid old place.” Walking on, they soon came to what appeared to be an interminable jungle of ivy, flaming with bloom.

“Here are some steps,” said Kathryn. “Oh, behold! A stairway covered with blooming ivy!”

“Yes; an old stairway,” said the Earl.

“A stairway in the ruins, covered with ivy! Flora, let’s name it the witches’ stairway.”

“Very well, Lady Kathryn,” she replied; “a very appropriate name.”

“Yes, call it so; a suitable name methinks,” said Edwin, “for I daresay there are many witches now hidden among the vines. So we’ll go on, Flora.”

Kathryn, who stood nearest the vines—quite near the steps—uttered a little shriek, and drew back. Edwin laughed merrily, and he and Flora strolled on.

“You are nervous, my Lady,” said the Earl.

“I own that I am, my Lord; and that boy has frightened me so! Then all this talk of ghosts, too. I am all a-tremble,” she said nervously.

“Let me assure you there is nothing here to harm you, my cousin,” he said, thrusting and probing among the vines with his sword-in-scabbard to reassure her. “Shall we not sit here on the steps a while?” They sat down amid the vines, the moonlight falling softly through on her hair, her face, and her hands. Her cheeks were like the mingling tints of snowy milk and blushing rose. He thought the liquid light from her melting eye,

“Soft as the broken solar beam
That trembles in the azure stream.”

Her beauty was bewildering to the Earl, who had not met her until to-day, and that in the presence of others, since the night of the fête at her uncle’s in Paris. And he said ardently:

“Oh, my cousin, how inexpressible is my joy to find myself once more beside you! Do you remember our last meeting?”

“In Paris? Oh, I shall never forget it! How long ago it is!”

“Near five months. Did you enjoy Paris?”

“Oh, so much! I was charmed; but to be away from mother and—all; oh——”

“It is, to me, a weary penance to be forced from your presence, even for one hour. Think, oh, think, what a lasting grief your long absence has been!” he said softly.

"You did not miss me?" she queried.

"Miss you! Oh, so much! But this is like the breaking of a new day over a dull world, banishing all darkness, to be once more permitted to enjoy the sunny glow of your countenance. Your presence brings life to my soul, awakening anew feelings of happiness. Blissful happiness!" Her lips trembled with suppressed emotion; she was very nervous, as she said sweetly, looking into his eyes:

"If I had it in my power, I would make—my friends happy always."

"Sweet cousin, it is perfect happiness, once more to hear your silvery voice, on whose breath, more sweet than that of siren, my fondest hopes are suspended," he murmured, while, not only his eloquent lips but his sparkling eye, the story of his love reveals.

Now a terrific crash and the clanking of chains startles their ear.

"Ha! What's that?" asked Louis, not far off.

"See to it, boys!" said the Earl.

"What can it be?" cried Louis, still gazing toward the spot whence had proceeded the sound.

"What! Louis, fear you to seek out the mystery?" exclaimed Guy, leaving Annie and starting forward.

"No, Guy; I fear none but 'earthly spirits black and envious.'"

And, stepping forward, he cried out tragically: "How now, you secret black and midnight hags! What is it you do?" Another tremendous crash is all the answer; and Louis stops short. All stand spell-bound with wonder and astonishment.

"My heart warns me 'tis something preternatural," said Guy, who had paused behind Louis.

"What! Only see!" cried Louis, pointing. "A ghostly spectre!"

And just above a broken wall was seen a gaunt and sheeted form with fiery eyes glowering upon them,

moving along the wall and wringing its hands as it glided along; then, turning, it glided back toward the spot where first seen, with chains clanking at every step.

"I've heard that ghosts never speak the first word," Guy said, in a whisper. "Suppose we speak to it, Louis."

"Fire in, then, Guy; I have addressed it once already."

"What sheeted ghost is wand'ring thro the storm?
For never did maid of middle earth choose such a time
or spot to vent her sorrows."

"Hist, Guy! There's no storm, boy!" whispered Louis.

"Well, Shakespeare says storm, and so say I," returned Guy.

The sheeted form paused, and, raising its hands, cried out distinctly:

"Woe, woe! Why come ye hither to disturb the spirits that have long lain at rest? Depart! Depart, or woe will overtake you!"

"Go!" cried Louis, with a wave of his hand. "Avaunt, thou unhallowed spirit! *Vanish!*" The spirit instantly vanished, with a rattling of chains.

"It makes my blood run cold," said Guy; "'and my hair to stand on end.'"

Now there was a wild scene. Some of the ladies shrieked, others fainted outright; the maids huddled together, falling into each other's arms and hiding their faces. Kathryn, at the first crash, was thrown into a terror, and when she beheld the spectre she cried out, swaying in her seat amid the vines. The Earl, supposing she had swooned, sustained her in his arms, holding her close to his breast, while listening to what was said. Then as the ghost vanished, recalling some lines from Muretus, murmured softly in her ear:

"Now I again may clasp thee, dearest,
What is there now on earth thou fearest?
Again these loving arms enfold thee,
Again, my rose, again I hold thee!"

She had not fainted, but heard the murmured words of his silver-toned voice; and, trembling violently, struggled to free herself; then said:

"Oh, please, my Lord! I am so terrified—I——"

"Yes, yes, darling; I know! Be not frightened. It is, no doubt, some of the servants, who, having been given much liberty on this occasion, have taken advantage of this fact to give us a little fright. But, dearest, I will protect you," he said, as he released her reluctantly and pressed her hand.

At the appearance of the ghost Flora had left Edwin and fled to her mother in great terror, and buried her face in her bosom. Between Guy and Louis Annie had stood, not the least daunted, the bravest spirit among the ladies, but spellbound with astonishment. Miss Augusta appeared to swoon, but instead of leaning for support on Lord Phantomfell threw herself into the arms of Captain Arranton, who stood beside her. He had caught her in time to prevent her falling to the floor, he thought; and held her while the spirit walked back and forth and spoke. She lay on his young bosom, a dead weight, her arms dangling over his shoulders. Edwin, being young, it had never before fallen to his lot to support a lady in a swoon. He was, therefore, much confused and knew not how to dispose of his burden, when Louis, who was now hastening to Rosa and Nora, who he feared were badly frightened in a far-off corner, at his earnest request came to his relief. They placed her gently on the stone floor, Edwin with some difficulty unclasping her arms from his neck. Louis, seizing the Captain's gold-laced hat, which lay near by, to Edwin's great dismay placed it beneath her head in lieu of a pillow. But the

wily Miss Augusta, who was not so unconscious but that she instantly perceived the difference between being supported on the breast of the handsome young Captain and lying on the cold flagged floor, regained consciousness at once, and sat up in a languid and most graceful attitude, with Captain Arranton's crushed hat in her lap, which she was handling caressingly when he came to recover it. Now he assisted her to her feet, and she seized upon his arm, asking him if really there had appeared a spectre; she could remember nothing of it. Edwin lost no time in finding her a seat; and making her a profound bow, went to seek his partner again, and found a quiet nook where he might pour forth the words of love now burning in his heart:

“‘Oh, moonlight hour! Holiest time for spirit of bliss,
Was ever moonlight hour so sweet as this;
To youthful heart in his first love!’”

Louis soon found Rosa and Nora and the two youths, who had recoiled into a dark corner while the spirit walked the earth. Taking one of Rosa's hands, he said, addressing both: “Were you frightened, ladies?”

“Half out of our wits,” returned Nora, all a-tremble, clinging to both Rorey and Julien.

“And you, little sweetheart?” he said to Rosa, aside. “‘Mid terrific sounds and spectres dim,’ were you much affrighted?” in a voice of unusual sweetness, pressing her soft and yielding hand.

“Frightened, Master Louis? No! I whistled all the while.”

“You ran away with Julien and left me, so I could not be with you. Why were you not frightened?”

“Oh, I'm not one of your timid ones; besides, Julien held me by the hand; and he wears a petit sword,

Master Louis. Then you did not care to be with me, anyway," with a saucy glance.

"Not care! Why, I felt drawn toward you all the time, as the needle is attracted toward the magnet. But you ran away, you witch! My heart is as constant to you as the Persian nightingale is to the rose."

"Can you avow this by the stars that twinkle in the sky overhead?" she asked, a triumphant gleam in her upturned eyes, as she gazed into the soft clouds floating over.

"By the stars, my Stormy Petrel, sweetheart!" he said, gazing on her upturned face, growing day by day more fascinating to him.

Thus midnight drew on. The moon had reached the horizon, investing the scene with her last bright rays, throwing long shadows athwart the flagged floors, for she had attained her first quarter.

From the quiet nook where Edwin had led her Flora, seeing the others preparing to repair to the hall, rose; and, sweeping him a curtsey, said:

"Good-night, Captain Arranton!"

"'Good-night!' Ah, must you say good-night? So short has been our stay in this enchanted spot!"

"Good-night once more!"

"Oh, repeat it o'er and o'er, till morning dawns, and still say good-night! One minute—stay! There is an age of joy in each moment while I listen to your voice——"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!" he murmured, with a sigh, as she ran to join the other girls. And long after he had retired to rest he could still hear a sweet voice saying: "Good-night!"

All repaired to the great hall where, after invocation by the visiting clergyman, the pages on bended knee offered the midnight draft of sleep of richly

spiced wines, served in gilded goblets from a massive bowl of silver. Then good-nights were spoken, and all retired to rest.



CHAPTER XXXI.

YOUNG LOVE.

"Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,
And men below, and saints above;
For love is Heaven, and Heaven is love."

THE first faint flush of dawn, dissipating the foggy canopy, crimsons the peaceful scene. The pale stars, gleaming, throw a silvery light upon the sea. The first sun's rays awake the pert and nimble spirits of mirth. "The sparkling nymphs, gay buds of beauty," are sporting on the lawny sands. Some are trying their skill with bow and arrows, a pastime much practised in those days; others swang in great swings suspended from the outstretched arms of oaks. After a few hours Captain Arranton made his appearance among them, glorious in his superb military uniform, handsomely groomed, attended by Silas, his black body-servant. In vain he tried to escape from Rosa, who kept him for nearly an hour, fetching her arrows, she shooting at random—just everywhere. Then he could but toss her for another hour, when she was minded to rest in one of the great swings. Then, after a long while, when he did gain his liberty, passing back and forth among the nymphs and looking all the while for one, he spied Flora with Nora, seated on a green, mossy bank aside from the others, their laps full of flowers, diligently selecting those of rich and delicate hue, and forming them into a bouquet. Nora rose, saying:

"I will run and fetch more, Flora, while you arrange these." And darted away. Captain Arranton approached and gave Flora a cordial greeting; and, tossing his hat on the mossy bank, dropped gracefully on one knee before her, and said:

"Do I again find my goddess among the flowers?"

"Who is your goddess, pray, Captain?"

"Flora; she is my goddess." Her pearly cheeks grew crimson. He gazed not on the bright flowers that at this moment seemed to engage all her attention, but on the witchery of her bright face.

"What call you this, my goddess of flowers?" he asked, selecting one, after watching her a while, as she deftly arranged a pretty bunch.

"A lily, sir," she said.

"And those, of such dark, rich dyes?"

"Hyacinths, Captain."

"Think you, Flora, they were named in honor of Hyacinthus, the unfortunate Hyacinthus, who met his death from the hands of one who loved him much?"

"Yes, sir; the Laconian youth, so loved by Apollo."

"Oh, poor Apollo! To cause the death of one whom he loved so dearly!

"That sanguine flower, inscribed with woe."

"And, Flora, can you discover on the petals inscribed the Greek letters, *'al, al,'* said to be Apollo's exclamation of grief on discovering he had slain his friend, the beautiful Hyacinthus?" He studied her face as she studied the flowers, and continued:

"'T would be a sorrowful mishap to cause the death of one whom you loved, as did Apollo."

Raising her face, she met a look of admiration from his speaking, dark eyes that caused her own to again seek her flowers.

"My goddess, as you sit here, with lap full of flow-

ers, the scene recalls to my mind a beautiful tribute to the floral month of May by one of our finest poets. Spencer says:

“Then came fair May, the fairest maid on ground,
Decked all with dainties of her season's pride,
And throwing flowers out of her lap around.’

“Are not you, then, the personification of his May—with lap full of flowers? Do you like the old poets, Flora?”

“Indeed, yes!”

“Will not you repeat a verse for me, Flora, from some dear old poet—of some flower, or, rather, of some beautiful maiden?” he asked.

“I will, with pleasure; of Emelie in the garden.”

“Yes, yes!”

“It felle ones in a morne of May,
That Emelie, that fayrer was to sene
Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,
And fresher than the May with floures newe,
For with the rose-colour strof hir hewe;
I n’ot which was the finer of hem two.”

How he hung on her words, and thought in his soul: “When did ever mortal eye behold such beauty and rich grace!” She had been working diligently; he, still kneeling, toyed with the flowers.

“It is complete,” she said, holding the bouquet for his admiration.

“How beautiful! And is this intended for thy lover, who sails the seas o’er in a little boat?”

“Captain, I have said I have no lover,” she said, raising her honest eyes to his.

“I promised to find one for you.”

“Yes,” she said, with downcast eyes.

“I have found him,” he said solemnly.

“Oh! So soon?”

"Yes," he returned, in a voice soft, rich and low.

"Is he nice?"

"Exceedingly—that is, the ladies call him so. Shall I describe him to you?"

"N—o. Oh, I do not know!" She was a little confused.

"He already worships you. May I not give him your flowers as a token of love?"

She trembled as she handed it to him, smiling.

"Thank you! Now shall I not tell you his name?"

"Oh, no!" she cried quickly, her breath almost leaving her.

"Why not?"

"Mayhap I shall find him out myself."

"That will you! Just watch who carries your flowers, my Flora."

Now Nora returned with more flowers. Captain Arranton rose, and, taking up his hat, with a bow motioned her to a seat beside Flora.

"Nora and Flora," he said, standing in front of the two; "what pretty names—and how they rhyme! I shall write a poem. And now, Miss Nora, who is to be the happy recipient of your nosegay when you have arranged it?"

"Why, we are arranging them for the decoration of the table at dinner! I shall give them to no one, I assure you, sir."

"Then you have no lover, Miss Shane, on whom to bestow your favor?"

"No! Lover? No; my heart is whole and fancy free. I should hate to be moping around with a lover."

"Truly? What of this fine page of Lady Hawren's, Master Julien?"

"Ah! That little Frenchman? I would not give *that* for him," she said, snapping her pretty fingers in

the air. Then, noticing the bouquet he held so lovingly, she turned sharply on Flora, saying:

"Have you given him your flowers? I thought you were assisting me to arrange them for the table."

"No, no!" replied Edwin quickly; "I am to find her lover and give them to him."

"Then," returned she archly, "I shall watch and see who carries them, and thus I can determine who is her lover."

Edwin blushed deeply and smiled on Flora; then, waving them a salute, turned and strolled off.

On the following morning the nymphs had all gathered on the beach, for they were going in the boats out to the little Fairy Isle, as they designated the small island with a few tall trees, which Flora and Edwin had observed from the ruins and had spoken of on their first meeting. Some of the men and servants had gone to fetch the boats from the boathouse a short distance up the beach, while others, with the nymphs, strayed along the shore or sat about on rustic seats, awaiting them. All were anxious to explore the little Fairy Isle.

Edwin first made his appearance, in a dainty little boat for two. As he drew near, the girls made a rush for the little narrow platform or landing plank extending over the water.

"Oh, Edwin, take me!" cried one.

"Oh, Captain, surely I am to go in that nice little boat!" exclaimed another. But Edwin stopped at a safe distance, saying:

"Whoever will leap in may go with me."

"Oh, do come nearer, Cousin Edwin!" urged Kathryn, manifesting much anxiety; then, turning to Rosa, she asked:

"Oh, Rosa, cannot you make the leap?"

"Ah, no! I should fall midway into the water; besides, I shall have a boat here in a few minutes, and

will myself take whoever I like. But here's Nora, who can perform the feat if any can."

Nora ran out to the end of the landing and cried imploringly:

"Oh, Captain Arranton, do come a little nearer; *do!*"

"Not a foot," he said, laughing. "If you can leap the interval I shall take you to the little Fairy Isle."

"Oh, Nora, Nora; do not!" cried Aunt Mary, in alarm lest the daring girl should try it.

"Indeed, then, I'll not attempt it, for I should only fall into the sea for you to have a good laugh, Captain; you hard-hearted—cruel—— Oh, Miss Bruneau, come up and make the effort and go with the Captain; he will doubtless draw up nearer for you," urged Nora.

"Oh, no, indeed! If Captain Arranton wished to take me in his boat he would ask me, I am sure," returned Miss Augusta tartly, standing back with dignity.

"He looks as though he would like to take you; so go on, Miss Augusta," Nora insisted.

"No, no; never!"

"Well, Cousin Edwin, who will you take if not me?" asked Kathryn.

"Any one who will come out on the end of the gangway and jump in, I assure you, my Lady," he said tantalizingly.

"Oh," she cried, "I never saw such a tantalizing boy! Nora, I know you can skip in; do try."

"Shure, Captain. If you will draw up just a foot nearer I will come in with you."

"Oh, Nora! No, no!" again cried Mrs. O'Neal.

"Edwin, Edwin!" exclaimed Lady Hawren. "How you tease the girls! Never mind, young ladies; here come the other boats."

Now all stood back on the strand, watching the ap-

proach of the boats, as they swept around a curve from the boathouse.

Edwin, catching Flora's eye, raised his hat and gave her an inviting smile. She had stood modestly back during the rush the other girls had made; but now walked gracefully out on the plank as he gave the light boat a shove which brought it alongside. She stepped in and seated herself amid a storm of pretended rage and abuse that now burst from the disappointed ones. But Edwin, "like a young Nile-bird," turns the prow toward the little Fairy Isle, while slight ripples break about the painted sides of the boat in soothing melody.

But soon the other boats were filled, and all set out to explore the little isle, on which none of the party had ever trod save the Earl, and Ambrose, his attendant.

When old Dexter Hawthorn, Rosa's faithful attendant, had drawn up with the most charming little barque in the Earl's possession, a small Egyptian row-boat which the Earl had, on finding she could gracefully and to good effect handle the oars, politely placed at her disposal, she turned to Louis, who stood near, waiting to see what she would do, and said jocosely:

"Now, Master Louis, if you will oblige me by stepping into my pleasure boat I will show you my skill in rowing."

Louis felt a new joy in his bosom swell as he sprang with lightsome step to the dainty seat she offered him. The gentle plash of the oar in her hand is music to his ear as they launch forth "o'er the crimson tide" and softly, but with gentle velocity, glide toward the isle.

The Fairy Isle, as the Nymphs had dubbed it, was covered with a wild luxuriance of vines and flowers; craggy stones were overhung with coral honeysuckle, clematis, eglantine and ivy. The flowery drapery

along the brink was duplicated in the sea with charming effect, giving it a twofold beauty. Three great trees stood as sentinels in the centre, their pendant branches dipping here and there into the waves, of so small size was the island.



CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"After many years do I once more behold thy face?"

NEXT morning at the breakfast table the Earl said: "By the way, ladies, there is to be a new arrival to-day."

"Who? Who?" the Nymphs all cry, manifesting much interest in having a new addition to their circle.

"The Doctor will arrive in a few hours," he said, "and you ladies will do well to be on the *qui vive*; for he's a fine old bachelor, as all of you know. The wonder to me is, Miss Bruneau, that you have not engaged his affections long ago," he said, with a bow and a smile toward Miss Augusta.

"Thank you, my Lord," returned she, with a disdainful toss of her head. "Indeed, I cannot say that I even *like* him," she continued stiffly.

"Not *like* him!" exclaimed Annie. "Why, we all like him; he is the dearest man!"

"Yes," said Kathryn; "not only like him, I just *love* the dear, adorable Doctor!"

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Rosa. "Lady Kathryn, I fancy you loving the old bachelor!"

"Oh, I love him as a father," she said saucily, with an arch look toward her mother, who blushed rosy. All joined in a good laugh at Lady Hawren's expense, and she said:

"Never mind! Never mind, girls; the Doctor is good enough for me, or any other woman; but he is not for me, neither am I for him; nor do I believe that any one of you girls can capture him, try as you may."

"Perhaps he is invulnerable to the shafts of Cupid," suggested Miss Augusta. "At any rate, I, for one, will not try. He is too old for me." And her glance rested lovingly on Captain Arranton, who sat opposite, beside her sister Rosa.

"I have heard some lines," said Guy, "which, with a little transposition, will apply to the Doctor's case; thus:

"'His heart is all on honor bent, he cannot stoop to love;
No lady in the land hath power his frozen heart to move.'"

'Mid a clapping of hands in approval of Guy's couplet, all now rose from the table, Lady de Bruce saying:

"And that is just true, too, of our dear Doctor; I am glad he is coming."

Mrs. O'Neal had not joined in the conversation, and, being a stranger in the neighborhood, knew not of whom they spoke, as they had called no name. The programme for this day was to have a fish dinner in a grove at the west end of the promontory. Many fine fishes had been secured for the occasion, which was called a fish-fry, although the fish was to be cooked in many different ways and there would be served many other delicacies. And at night they were to have a grand supper inside. A few hours later, while much preparation was being made to get off to the grove and the sandy beach, Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal sat by the library table, deeply interested in the intricacies of a new piece of embroidery. They heard some one arrive and the mingling of voices in the hall, but paid no attention, continuing with their

work and conversing pleasantly. Presently the portiere was withdrawn and the Earl appeared, saying:

"Aha! Here you are Lady de Bruce and my dear aunt, hidden away here with your fascinating work, and would allow the King himself to arrive and never know it. Here, Doctor!" And, reaching outside, he drew the Doctor in, saying:

"Allow me to introduce you to my aunt, Mrs. O'Neal, Doctor Godkins."

Doctor Godkins seemed thunderstruck. Mrs. O'Neal had risen, and stood, her arms hanging limp by her side. The Doctor, forcing himself to speak, seized one of her hands, saying:

"Why, bless my soul, Mary!"

The Earl said: "Then you have met my aunt before? And here is Lady de——" But Mrs. O'Neal sank back in her chair in a dead faint. Lady de Bruce and Clifton hastened to her assistance, and placed her on the sofa, her waxlike face as white as marble; and restoratives were freely applied.

Doctor Godkins turned suddenly to the door; and, coming face to face with Kathryn and Annie, who were following to the library, he checked them, saying:

"Oh, ladies, you have not seen my new horse! Come, come to the door and see! I must speak to the groom in regard to him." He took them back to the front door to see his horse; but soon left them and went with the groom.

Mrs. O'Neal soon opened her eyes, and, looking from one to the other, was on the point of swooning again; but they continued the application of restoratives and chafing her hands. Then she after a time opened her eyes, and looked about as though dreading yet longing to see some one.

"Darling aunt, what can I do for you?" asked the Earl anxiously.

"Oh, thank you, my Lord; nothing!"

"Oh, you are better now, Mary!" exclaimed Lady de Bruce.

"Somewhat, thank you, Lady de Bruce. Will you ring for Joan? I must go to my room."

"Oh, certainly! Yet, stay! I will accompany you, Mary; allow me to see you to your room."

She gave the Earl her hand to rise, and as she rose she gave him a reassuring smile to dispel any anxiety he might feel concerning her; and, leaning on Lady de Bruce's arm, she left the room. On reaching the hall she cast a furtive glance around, and seeing no one but the group of young ladies at the front door crossed the hall to her apartments.

Lady de Bruce placed her upon a couch and carefully adjusting a pillow under her head, asked if she might remain with her; or should she ring for Joan, her maid.

"Dear friend, you shall not shut yourself in with me all day, for I feel that I shall not be able to go out—perhaps not before evening."

"Oh, Mary, if I could be of any comfort to you, or assist you in any way, I will gladly remain! I will not leave you here alone through the long day."

"Marjorie, I cannot think of keeping you. Please send Joan to me, and go, yourself, out with the others. I assure you I am not ill; only weak and nervous. You *must* go! I will not keep you. They have planned for such a nice day."

Lady de Bruce felt a delicacy in remaining, thinking her friend would probably prefer to be alone; so she kissed her flushed cheek and said:

"Do not yourself stay here all day, Mary; but come out with us after a little and enjoy the fresh air."

"Thank you, Marjorie; I will try to come if I feel better." But she held on yet to Lady de Bruce's hand and asked eagerly:

"Does any one know of—that I—swooned save you two?"

"No, dear; I assure you of it. Lady Hawren was in the dining room with Mrs. Macleod, and the girls were all at the front door."

"Where did—he go?"

"The Doctor? He is here somewhere, and is to be one of our party for the remainder of our stay here; we could not get on without him, he is such a dear!" returned Lady de Bruce.

"Oh—oo!" she moaned. "Then I *must meet* him! Oh, do not think, Lady de Bruce; do——"

"Hush, dear; do not say it unless you wish to."

"Oh, but you will think so——"

"No, no; not at all! You have a right to your secret, Mary; you have a right to keep it if you wish," Lady de Bruce returned kindly.

"But my Lord Clifton; what will he think of this?"

"Never mind, dear. Now I will leave you alone a while, to collect yourself; you are nervous."

After Mrs. O'Neal and Lady de Bruce had left the library the Earl started out to find Doctor Godkins, who had disappeared while they were attending to his aunt. The young ladies in the hall said he had gone with the groom to put away his horse. The Earl then went to the stables, but found him not. Andy pointed to the ruins of the old church, saying: "He went in that direction." After some time the Earl found him alone, walking wildly up and down a sandy stretch of beach. Doctor Godkins had left the hall with Andy, ostensibly to see to the care of his fine horse; but as soon as he was out of sight of the girls he drew his hat down over his face and, plunging into the coppice, tore his way on, never stopping to see where he was going; presently finding himself on the beach below the old church, he walked to and fro; and thus he communed with himself:

"Oh, ye gods; it is Mary! And she has not forgotten me. No! By St. George, she swooned at sight of me! What thought the Earl of it? Ye gods! I was dumfounded—taken altogether by surprise, and could scarcely speak. My pretty little Mary! But where is O'Neal? Is he living? Is he dead? So we are to be thrown together here for some days. Mary, Mary——"

"Why, Doctor, I had expected to find you with the young ladies, instead of promenading the beach here all alone! And it is time we were fishing, too, if you wish to enjoy the sport."

"By St. George, my Lord; why do you not all come along, then, and let us begin! Is not this the time and place? And here am I all in readiness to begin the sport. Now who is to blame?"

"No; it is not here we fish; just above in the mouth of a small stream are the fishermen with the boats. But, Doctor, it appears to me you are a queer kind of physician, to run away on the occasion of a lady's swooning, instead of lending assistance."

"Tut, tut! Too many cooks spoil the broth. Too many hands are worse than none in case of syncope."

"But, Doctor, what can have caused the syncope?" the Earl asked, eyeing him earnestly.

"Let's see," said the Doctor, assuming a professional look; "it's proximate causes: Loss of blood, profound emotional disturbance, or heart disease. She rose suddenly from a sitting posture—it may be the syncope was caused by a receding of blood from the heart; possibly a flow to the head; or——"

"Doctor! Stuff! Nonsense! It seems that you were acquainted—knew each other."

"Why, bless you, my Lord, Mary and I were brought up together. I have known her just always. By St. George, I guess she was a little surprised to see me; that's all! Why, I have not seen nor heard of

her for seventeen years." Now he paused; and, looking the Earl steadily in the face, asked: "My Lord, she has told you nothing?"

"Nothing," he replied.

"Then, by St. George, my Lord, *I* shall tell you nothing without her permission."

"You are right, Doctor. If there is aught I should know she will surely tell me. Come, let us go."

Mrs. O'Neal did not feel better, and remained in her room through the day. Not only Lady de Bruce, Lady Hawren and the young girls, but the Earl, also, came repeatedly to know if she felt well enough and would come out and join them on the beach. But she reclined all day on her couch. Joan brought her a lunch at noon, though she ate nothing. In the evening she rose, and with her maid's assistance was soon attired for supper, and went across the great hall to the drawing-room. No one was here yet but Lady Hawren; the others were engaged in dressing for the evening. Lady Hawren, so gentle and thoughtful, gave her a seat beside her on the sofa, saying:

"We were so sorry that you felt indisposed to-day and were debarred the pleasure of being out with us. We have enjoyed a splendid time. Doctor Godkins is here, an old friend, and an elegant and distinguished physician and surgeon. By the way, a nice old bachelor! I wish you to meet."

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs. O'Neal nervously, trying to repress the tumult within. "I met him this morning. He is an old friend of mine."

"Oh, truly? How glad I am!"

Now the party began to assemble. Lord and Lady de Bruce entered. Then came Kathryn and Flora through the portieres from Lady Hawren's room at the farther end on the right, for the rest of the hangings dividing this suite from the drawing-room composed a solid wall. Annie and Lord Phantomfell en-

tered from the great hall, where they had been promenading, and where they had left Doctor Godkins and Rose conversing in the front window.

Miss Augusta sat in front of her pier-glass, her maid, Amanda, who was both old and ugly, making strenuous efforts to please her capricious mistress in the make-up of her toilette for the evening.

"There, 'Manda; a little more rouge on this side; do not you see that you have it uneven? Do not fear to put on too much; I wish to look rosy this evening; I *must* look my best. Now the bunch of curls. Place them just atop my head—in front of the coiffure—there! It is said, Amanda, that I resemble Queen Elizabeth; certainly my hair *is* the very shade of hers, said to be like the last parting sunbeam of the softest day of spring, or like a golden thread from the web wrought by Minerva."

"Indeed, thou art not unlike the great Queen, Mistress; a noble, striking and commanding figure. May Heaven pardon the falsehood—a beautiful and amiable character—if only she had not, with such persistent cruelty, persecuted the Puritans."

"Hers was, indeed, a haughty and imperturbable spirit; and, though she was the glory of the age in which she lived, she could not be called amiable, 'Manda; for, when angry, she would swear, and slap the courtiers in the face. I have never yet been guilty of such an act, 'Manda; I would scarce do that! Though I did feel enough like slapping the face of my Lord Phantomfell for him last year at the hunting tower, when he persistently kept my company to the exclusion of all others. Now the back hair, 'Manda; pile it high, wench—now the bouffons, and place the combs. Yes, the Captain is remarkably handsome——"

"He's very young, Mistress Augusta; I should think—there is Lord Phantomfell would suit you, and Doc-

tor Godkins; there's not so great a dispari—I mean, they are old enough—nice bachelors——”

“Get out, you impudent old maid!” exclaimed Miss Augusta, stamping her foot furiously. “Yet, stay; reach my fan ere you leave, wench. Now go put away my things, if you can find space for them. I declare, to be forced to share one's dressing room with others is insufferable! Why we three were crammed in these small rooms when there are Mrs. Macleod and Flora who might have been sent to the basement, I cannot comprehend.”

When Amanda left the apartment Miss Augusta, as if continuing a reverie, said: “Yes, handsome—if that troublesome sister of mine was out of the way! Yet I doubt not he prefers my society to hers. Then that girl Flora, always putting herself in his way; and Nora Shane, that red-haired, freckled-faced—outrageous—— Captain Arranton is such a gentleman he cannot refuse to notice them. Her hair is *red*—RED!—while mine is ‘pale gold,’ as was called Queen Elizabeth's, and has been likened unto hers, and said to be like the threads of Minerva's web. That insolent wench, to refer to the disparity between our ages! 'Tis nothing to speak of—a little, very little, indeed. Oh, a young man for me or none! Old bachelors, forsooth! Lord Phantomfell—Doctor Godkins? Mercy? Yet, the Doctor is not so bad, either. But those girls! It is ever thus; I can never settle myself for a *tête-à-tête* with Captain Arranton but must come one or more of them flitting up to call him away. He is only amusing himself with them, the silly ones! I am sure no sensible man can see any charms in those romping girls. He admires a woman of sense. I feel quite sure he came around in his little boat to-day expressly for me; but those foolish girls plagued him so, pretending they would jump in, and would have done so had he dared to draw up nearer—they are so bold—

and just as soon as he did draw near that Flora stepped out and seated herself as complacently as though she had been invited. I declare it is abominable; and I will not stand it!" With a toss of her head, as she surveyed herself in the glass, she stepped into the hall, and there joined Doctor Godkins and Rosa. Laughing and joking, the Doctor apparently happy, they entered the drawing-room. He soon discovered that Mrs. O'Neal was among the ladies. Now the other men came in, and conversation flowed freely for a while; then supper was announced. Lady Hawren rose, saying:

"My Lord, you will lead the way with Lady de Bruce." She then requested Lord de Bruce to accompany Miss Hamilton. And turning to Doctor Godkins, she said sweetly: "You will attend Mrs. O'Neal. I understand you are old friends, Doctor." She then arranged the other couples, being careful to see that Edwin accompanied Miss Bruneau and not Flora. The Doctor turned deathly pale; but, gallantly offering his arm to Mrs. O'Neal, led her down the long hall into the dining-room and seated her, neither speaking a word. And during supper they both joined in the conversation around the table, yet neither addressed the other. Mrs. O'Neal ate nothing; the Doctor very little. And when the ladies rose he, as usual, rose and offered her his arm.

"Oh, Doctor," called Louis, "do not leave us thus; stay and have a little wine!"

"No, Louis; no wine for me. I do not indulge in wine, as you well know. I will go with the ladies," he said; and they followed the crowd. The Earl looked after them with a puzzled expression. He had felt not a little chagrined when he heard Lady Hawren say to the Doctor: "You will attend Mrs. O'Neal, Doctor; I understand that you are old friends." But he thought: "I will wait and see what comes of it."

Doctor Godkins and Mrs. O'Neal followed slowly on behind the others, and spoke not until they had traversed the great hall and were near the entrance to the drawing-room. He felt her hand tremble on his arm; and, placing his hand on hers, said in a shaking voice:

"Oh, ye gods, Mary; this will never do! You must not feel badly; you were not to blame. 'Twas I who did wrong and am blameable for all——"

She burst into a storm of tears, withdrew her hand, and fled into the nearest room, which was Kathryn's, at the right of the drawing-room, opening into the great hall, and closed the door behind her.

Doctor Godkins turned him about. He felt he could not join the ladies in the drawing-room, but must have a little solitude. And seeing a way of escape through the moonlit corridor leading to the ruins, he rushed forth into the fresh air. Here he walked to and fro over the flagged stones, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy"; and thus he communed with himself:

"Ye gods! What think you now? By St. George, I must make a diagnosis of this case! Why did she swoon on first seeing me? Profound emotional disturbance," he mused. "Does she still love me; or was it hatred that caused the profound emotional disturbance? And now, at a few words from me, she runs away in a passion of tears. Ye gods! Tears of grief or tears of anger? I know not which. He paused and looked over the sea, now calmly sleeping, bathed in the soft moonlight. Anon he turned again, and, walking up and down, continued his soliloquy: "Did I think the sight of her, after so many years, could arouse such a storm of unrest in my brest? By St. George, she is more lovely than ever! But I'll never let her know, I will first discover whether it is love or hatred she entertains for me. But—ye Gods! O'Neal? Where is he? Living or dead? Oh, good

Lord!" he groaned; and, clasping his hands, he gazed up into the starry heavens and cried:

"Open thy melancholy eyes, O night, and gaze on me
That I may feel the charm that lies in their dim mystery;
Unveil thine eyes so gloomy bright, and look upon my
soul,
O Night!"

Drawing forth his handkerchief, he mopped his brow; then turning resolutely, he wended his way back to the drawing-room.

The men were now gathering in from supper. Doctor Godkins perceived at a glance that Mrs. O'Neal was not present, then found himself a seat amid a group of mischievous and fun-loving girls. And after jesting with them for a while he took a seat beside Miss Annie, whose society he always enjoyed, for she was possessed of a lively wit.

Presently Mrs. O'Neal, wishing not to be observed, slipped quietly in at the side from the portiers of Lady Hawren's room; for under the present situation the ladies made free with each other's rooms, especially the suite which had been assigned to Lady Hawren and Kathryn, by which they passed back and forth when not wishing to cross the drawing-room while filled with company.

Lord Phantomfell, sitting near the entrance, rose; and, bowing low, said:

"Allow me, Mistwess O'Neal, to offer you a seat." Then seating himself quite near her, he took her fan; and while gently fanning her, he said:

"How beautifully wosy your cheeks are this evening, Mistwess O'Neal; you are beginning to improve already, inhaling this fwesh sea air."

Doctor Godkins had observed her entrance, though engaged in an animated quarrel with Miss Annie, and heard Phantomfell's remark, for his voice was sharp

and loud; and, glancing that way, thought indeed she was more beautiful than he had ever seen her. And she looked exceedingly happy, her face lit up with a rare smile, her rounded lips vermilion in hue, her eyes bright and sparkling; but so modest and quiet was she that but few knew of her presence.

"What can have made her so happy?" the Doctor wondered. And though he kept up a lively conversation with Annie, his eyes and thoughts were on Mrs. O'Neal. Then seeing that she and Lord Phantomfell with Lord de Bruce and Lady Hawren were arranging for a game of chess, he asked Annie to promenade with him; and they passed into the great hall, where they were soon followed by several other couples—Captain Arranton and Flora; Lord Clifton and Kathryn, and Louis and Rosa; all speculating as to whether the weather would be fair next day for a dinner *al fresco*, and for the grand *Fête-champetre* which the Earl had gone to great expense to have arranged for them in the evening.

When the Earl had seen his aunt enter the drawing-room looking so charmingly happy, her face suffused with a roseate glow, he thought that the Doctor and she had probably had a long talk and had adjusted matters or come to an understanding.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DAY ON THE SHELLY SANDS.

"All, all, are here to share with me
The genius of festivity."

ON the following morning the Earl conducted the party to a little grotto on the beach, a few paces below a charming grove, where they were to have dinner on the greensward. This grotto was rather an artificial cavern-like apartment, which had been formed amid

the rocks for the occasion, but had a natural covering, being overgrown with furz or gorse, now yellow with bloom; a floor of smooth, flat stones was covered with skins and rugs. The room was furnished with some rustic chairs and a long seat, which might be called a settee, with back and arms. There were many cushions and pillows tossed about, giving an air of comfort, this being a place where the ladies or others came to rest when tired out. The mouth or entrance to this grotto was on the beached-verge of the water, and not far below the little boat landing. On the right of the entrance grew clumps of wild rose and eglantine, through which a wimpling streamlet gurgled its way into the sea.

Lady Hawren had sought Edwin; and, leaning on his arm, they strolled a-down the sandy beach and entered this cosiest of grottoes, where she sank upon a bank of cushions, as she said:

"Be seated, Edwin; I will not long keep you from the joyous young people with whom you seem to be so happy."

He sat gracefully upon the long settee, and, placing his hat beside him, answered, with a bright smile:

"How happy they do appear this morning, dear aunt! I do not know that I was ever before thrown among a happier group; and I the happiest of them all!" he said, transported with pleasure. Lady Hawren hesitated, then with an apparent effort she said:

"Dear Edwin, I have asked this interview with you in order to give you a little warning which I greatly fear I have too long deferred."

"Very well, then, aunt; you will excuse me if I stretch myself along this inviting seat with one of those cushions under my head," he said, suiting his action to his words. "One gets pretty tired, roving day after day, and getting little or no rest at night. Now I can listen most comfortably to your sweet talk;

or was it—a warning?” he asked, with some misgivings. “What can you mean, aunt?”

“Dear boy, you well know that you are of a lineage as distinguished and ancient as that of anyone here—and that is saying much, considering here is Lord de Bruce, of very ancient and noble name; and as to the Earl of Fleetwood, none can claim better descent. Lord Phantomfell is of a fine old family. The Misses Brunaugh have a brother, now one of the noblest Barons of Scotland.”

“Dear aunt, what——”

“You must know, Edwin, you can never marry a woman beneath your station.”

“My station at present, dear aunt, I fear, is not an exalted one—a Captain with ‘no other fortune but his commission and a Highland pedigree’; nothing but a long line of ancestors for a commendation.”

“An untarnished lineage such as yours is worth much, Edwin. You should be proud of your illustrious race. You would be a welcome suitor in any noble family, and you must know that you can never stoop to take a bride of birth inferior to your own.”

“Dear aunt, what can have moved you to make this speech?” he asked, manifesting much uneasiness. “Can you be wishing to select a bride for me,” with an attempt at playfulness which proved altogether a failure. “I am young yet, and——”

“Yes, Edwin, I know. But the idea is to start off right. If you must fall in love, be sure it is with the proper person. Do not embarrass yourself by becoming irrevocably attached to one with whom you can never form an alliance; for of all things, you must avoid a mesalliance. Your birth of high degree demands it. The bones of your ancestors would clang together in their cerements. Your lineage allies you, nearly, with the present Duke of Hamilton, the Earl of Athole, and many other equally noble families.

You, dear boy, must never alienate yourself by an inferior alliance."

"Dear aunt, what can you mean? To whom do you refer?" he asked, with a sickening sensation at his heart.

"To Flora," she replied briefly.

"She's an angel of light; she's glorious! No one could help loving her—a vision of loveliness!" he exclaimed vehemently, rising to a sitting posture.

"Oh, Edwin, Edwin! Am I too late with my warning?"

"Oh, aunt, surely—— What can be wrong with that sweet creature? Who is she?"

"Edwin, you should have asked this sooner, or I should have earlier spoken to you. I have intended to do so, but kept hoping there would be no necessity for it. And oh, am I too late?" she cried, clasping her hands; then continued: "Know this, dear boy; there can never be anything between you but the most delicate friendship."

"Tell me; oh, tell me why!" he cried, starting up, anguish depicted in his face, erstwhile aglow with happiness.

"Oh, Edwin, do not ask me; I wish to say no more. But let what I have said be as the law of the Medes and Persians."

"I must know. I cannot live!" he groaned, wringing his hands.

"Oh, surely, Edwin, you do not love Flora already; you have not committed yourself?" she asked, anxiously.

"Madly do I love her—passionately! Surely, dear aunt, there can be no reason why I should not——"

"Her birth, Edwin; she is of low birth. It will never, never do to think of her——"

"Oh, my God!" he cried, with ashen lips and haggard cheeks, burying his face in his hands. "Oh,

surely there can be—can be—no dishonor—no, no

“No; oh no, Edwin! No, my poor boy! I would not for one moment have you think that. Her mother is an honorable and most estimable woman, of noble character; but has for years held the position of an upper servant at Fleetwood, and has proven herself one of the most competent of housekeepers. Apparently, in some degree relieved, Edwin raised his head, his face all aflame.

“Aunt, I have noticed carefully since I first met Flora, and observed Mrs. Macleod has been shown by the Earl a marked degree of respect, and by your household has ever been treated much as a companion.”

“Indeed, that is true, Edwin. It was my grandfather’s wish that it should be so, on Flora’s account, as well as for her own sake. She has been as a mother to my Lord since he was about seven years of age; and Flora has been brought up in close intimacy with him, even as a sister—the pet and darling of the household. Mrs. Macleod’s office is but that of a sinecure, as she keeps a regular staff of servants to do the work, with a number of competent women over these.”

“Then, aunt, how—why—” he stammered.

“Her father, Edwin, was a low-born villain—a vulgar captain of a brigantine; a pirate; a smuggler, or some such outlaw—and, Edwin, I am not at liberty to speak further. There are other particulars which I may not mention.” Edwin, with a groan, again buried his face in his hands. Lady Hawren’s sympathy was manifest; but, to draw his mind from his sorrow, she suggested:

“Now, Edwin, if you could admire Miss Rosa, how different it would be; she is certainly a very sweet girl, and the family connections are all that could

be wished—are most excellent. And Lord de Bruce, having no heir, will doubtless leave her a fine share of his immense wealth. A union with her, Edwin, would be most desir——”

“Peace, peace, darling aunt! Oh, my God!” he exclaimed, and threw himself along the seat, almost overcome with grief. Lady Hawren rose, the tears streaming down her cheeks, and, adjusting the cushion under his head, she said softly:

“Lie here and rest a little, now, darling boy. Shall I leave you alone?”

“Yes, yes! Oh, that I might die—to have my heaven thus turned into—— Oh-o-!” he moaned.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CONFESSION.

MRS. O'NEAL immediately after dinner took Lady de Bruce's arm and asked her to take a stroll with her beneath the shade. Then, seeing the Earl standing apart, they approached and asked him to accompany them in their promenade. Annie, who sat, with Doctor Godkins, beneath an overhanging beech, perceived that his eyes followed them as they walked away.

“You look wistfully after that trio, Doctor, as if you would very much enjoy being one of the party,” she said teasingly.

“What; what! And leave you? No, never! Now, if you will promenade, we'll go together and have a stroll.”

Annie took his arm and they joined the others of the party, happily promenading in the shade.

Mrs. O'Neal and her friends withdrew a short distance from the company of the others and seated themselves on a green, mossy bank; then she said:

"My Lord, I feel that I owe to you and Lady de Bruce an explanation. I must explain the cause of my swooning yesterday morning—as painful as it may be for me to do so. I could not speak of it at the time——"

"No, my aunt, do not inflict upon yourself the pain; if you have a secret, you have a right to keep it."

"No, Mary, we know there was good cause, and that is sufficient," said Lady de Bruce, kindly.

"Yes," said Mrs. O'Neal, "you will know there was a cause, and not knowing that cause might place a wrong construction upon my conduct. If you will agree to listen, and never repeat what I shall say, I will tell you the romance of my life."

"Well, dear aunt, if you are perfectly free to do so, we are quite willing to listen to your romance—eh, Lady de Bruce?"

"Yes, yes, my Lord; I feel that the romance of your life, Mary, must prove quite interesting."

"An affair *de coeur*, my aunt, between yourself and the good doctor?"

"Yes, my Lord," she said, with glowing cheeks, adjusting herself for the story, and began:

"At the age of seventeen, George Godkins and I were betrothed. And I know now that we both loved fondly; and there was never truer love than ours. After we had been betrothed for some weeks and were looking forward, with bright anticipations and the happiest of hearts, to the day on which the espousal rites would be celebrated, my cousin, Esther Etherington, now Lady Esther Etherington, of whom, my Lord, you have heard me speak, with her mother, came to make us a visit. Esther immediately fell in love with George—then a medical student—and set to work to rob me of my lover. He took little notice of her at first, but after a time, having such flattering at-

tentions paid him by her and her mother, he began flirting a little with her. I became enraged with jealousy; yet he was very nice, and told me truly he meant nothing—was just having a little fun. All of a sudden Esther and her mother determined to return home to Edinburgh on the following morning. They got in their carriage and started, going by the Godkins residence, and took the Doctor with them. I knew that George had business in Edinburgh and had intended going on this day, for he had taken sweet leave of me the evening previous, to be gone two weeks; but, on finding he had gone in the carriage with Esther, I was wild with jealousy, for I believed it was a collusion, and so it was, on the part of Esther and her mother. They were both capable of almost anything. That evening, as I sat alone on a little balcony overhanging the garden, distressed beyond measure, I heard the two maids talking below, for Esther, in order to have room in her carriage for George, had left Nancy, her maid, to come on next day in the stage coach, which passed the Godkins residence. ‘Sure, Lucy,’ said Nancy, ‘did you know that Mistress Esther and Doctor Godkins are to be married right away?’ ‘No, they are not, neither!’ returned Lucy, ‘for he is going to marry Mistress Mary—I know that.’ ‘Indeed he is not, for Mistress Esther told me just before starting that they would be married right away, when they get to Edinburgh, and that I must come along on to-morrow’s coach, for that she would need me. She bid me tell no one save you, Lucy.’ ‘She well knows that I keep nothing from Mistress Mary, Nancy——’ I heard no more, but fell in a swoon. The maids heard me, and ran hastily to my assistance; took me to my room, and brought mother to me. When I regained consciousness I told her all—that he had gone away with Esther, and they were to be married. She tried in every way

to defend him, for she loved him as her own son. Pride came to my rescue. I told her I would never forgive him; never! Next morning I penned him a few lines and sent to him, with our engagement ring, by Nancy:

“ ‘George with this ring I restore to you your freedom. MARY.’ ”

“I lived through the day in a perfect languor of anguish. In the evening Lieutenant O’Neal called. He found me in the sitting-room, alone, for had I known he was coming I would not have received him, feeling so miserable. His company was stationed at Lochabar, and he had been dropping in often of late. He knew not that Doctor and I were affianced, the bans had not been announced, and but a few of our nearest friends were aware of our betrothal. It seemed that Lieutenant O’Neal had loved me from our first meeting. His company being ordered West immediately, he had called to ask me to marry him. My head was all in a whirl. How could I ever live here, meeting often with George and Esther, and feel that my love had been slighted. Here was an escape; I would marry first, and leave; then they would not have me to exult over. Lieutenant O’Neal was importunate. I resolved to wed him. I told him that I could not give him my heart’s first love, but would try to learn to love him. He was satisfied and happy. I then told him that my parents would never consent to our marriage, and that we would be compelled to elope. I wished them to know that my marriage had taken place prior to theirs. He consented, and that very night we mounted and rode to the village, and were married, Lucy alone attending me. Just before starting I went to my mother, who was alone in her room, my father having gone from home on some business, and told her what I was going to do; just how and why it was; that my pride would not

permit me to live where I would see him after he was married to another; that Lieutenant O'Neal was ordered away to Ayr, and that we would leave on the morrow. Calling for help, she would have forced me to remain, but I ran out; we mounted and dashed off, and in an hour were married. Mother afterwards wrote me a letter, telling of George's return, which was immediately after receiving my note with the ring; of his great distress of heart and mind when she told him of my marriage to another; my reason for it, and all that I had told her; for, contrary to my wishes, she told him all. He then told her that he had never thought of marrying Esther, and knew not why they had so suddenly determined to return home. They had come by, and insisted that, as they were on their way to Edinburgh, he should have a seat in their carriage, and not await the lumbering old stage coach, which would be along in an hour, by which he had intended going. Then, mother wrote, he bowed down his head and wept; and they both wept together over my hasty and violent disposition. In a short time he went away to India, and I never heard more of him."

"Dearest aunt, truly you were too hasty; you did very wrong," the Earl said, as he slipped down on the green turf and placed his head upon her lap. "And now I am going to lie here and have a good rest, while I give you a scolding for being so jealous-natured and so hasty."

Her face was crimson as she kissed his cheek and said:

"But, my Lord, he told me last night, coming away from supper, that I was not to blame; that it was all his fault. Yet it was not so—the kind heart, to claim all the fault himself; to relieve my heart of such a weight of sorrow. I almost wept my eyes away when he said it."

"This, then, accounts for the flushed and beaming face which you wore all last evening, and the happy countenance you still carry."

"He is truly one of the noblest of men," said Lady de Bruce, "thus to exonerate you, Mary; bearing all the blame himself."

"I have suffered, I think, enough for my disobedience to my mother, and this kindly assurance removes from my heart a great burden, though I know that I alone am blamable in this instance."

"I very much believe, Mary, that every act of disobedience toward parents is followed up with sorrow and remorse," said Lady de Bruce.

"Lieutenant O'Neal was as good a husband, I believe, as any woman ever had, and he tried in every way to make me happy. I had wronged him, as well as myself, by marrying him, and in my effort to render him happy I made my own life more bearable."



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

"When wine and mirth did most abound,
And harpers played their blithest round,
A shrilly trumpet shook the ground,
And marshals cleared the ring."

Now evening with her richest dyes flames o'er the sea, the lovely glen and the ruinous old castle. The slope north and east of the old Convent Church had been cleared of all the usual débris. The lake, or arm of the sea, which extended around the promontory was dotted with small boats. There was in a charming grove a simulation of Chindara's Fountain, contrived from a natural rivulet, where concealed in-

struments were constantly playing. Swings had been prepared for the delighted Nymphs, and their merry laughter rang out joyously over the placid sea. About the borders of the grove mothers sat in groups, chatting around their tents, for the Earl had invited his retainers to take part in this day's sports, their chubby infants rolling and tumbling on the turf at their feet in greatest glee. There were among these a number of lads and lassies in gay attire, who, a little later on in the evening, while the piper, dressed in proper costume, with his hornpipe, chanters and drones, briskly played "Jenny put the kettle on" and sundry other jigs and hornpipes, danced reels, strathsprays and jigs to their heart's content. And so fascinating was this exercise that Rorey and Julien, in their rich page's costume, selecting partners from among the rustic beauties, joined in for a short time with the merry dancers; while some of the older men were playing quarterstaff and running foot-races. Early the lamps were being lighted.

A thousand sparkling lights were placed about the ancient ruins, the crumbling Convent walls, in lovely bowers, and twinkled in the groves, although the moon was at her full to-night, and soon would rise in all her refulgent splendor.

Now the Earl, the soul of good-fellowship, in passing, observed the children at play around their mothers' knee. Speaking kindly to one of the women, who was the young wife of the dairyman at Fleetwood, and a great favorite with the women at the castle, he stooped and took up the year-old boy from her lap, saying:

"Oh, Madge, let me borrow the chubby little fellow awhile and show him to some of my friends, and let him watch the lamps as they are being lighted." He walked away with him to where some of the attendants were lighting the lamps. The rosy little

cherub, delighted to have someone walk him about, waved his little hands and screamed with glee, winking his bright eyes at the many twinkling lights now appearing on all sides. Lady Kathryn stood, with Doctor Godkins, not far off, watching the lighting up. As the Earl approached them she cried out:

"Oh, here's sweet little Jamie! My Lord, bring him near and let me kiss his dimpled cheeks and chubby hands. I am all joy at seeing the little pet." She kissed his cheeks and his dimpled hands. Then the youngster, overjoyed at his surroundings, quickly stretching forth both his chubby hands, seized her by her bright brown curls, and, drawing her head up against himself, began to bang it unmercifully.

"Oh, you wicked little tyrant! Is that the way you treat young ladies who give you such sweet kisses?" the Earl said, trying to disentangle the dapper little fingers from amid her flowing hair.

Raising her glowing face, Kathryn said to the babe, patting his soft cheeks: "Oh, you little rogue! I shall be more chary of my kisses hereafter, at least I shall not be offering to kiss every young nan I meet."

"You wicked Jamie," said the Earl, "I shall take you back to your mother as a punishment for your rudeness."

Paying no heed to them, Doctor Godkins stood gazing across the area where Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal were watching some arrivals, for the whole country had been invited in, to arrive about dusk.

Having taken Jamie back to his mother, the Earl, returning, thought he would sit or walk with Kathryn, but found that she and the Doctor had repaired to a rustic seat in a sweet little nook overrun with wild rose vines. He went to receive some guests who were arriving. Many couples of young people who had arrived were promenading amid the lovely scenes.

A minstrel's gallery had been erected among some lovely trees, whence now issued richest strains of melody; and merry laughter echoed from the groves. Bright faces, illumined with happy smiles, in ecstasies of joy, flashed from place to place.

Many long and hastily improvised tables had been spread for the noble guests, loaded with superb and delicious viands. A table for the nobility was also laid.

Leaving the Doctor and Kathryn to themselves, and while lamplight with soft twilight did content and spread over all, like a shadowy dream, restoring to life's prime old dowagers of sixty or more, and even Nymphs, that in the bright blaze of daylight were lovely to look upon, by the halo thrown around them became angels of light, the softening twilight bringing out many erstwhile hidden graces. The Earl, "on hospitable thoughts intent," went forth to receive some new arrival, as a chaise drew up in the distance. A military-looking man descended, whom the Earl received with much cordiality and conducted across the area to the retreat where Kathryn and Doctor Godkins sat.

"Who comes here with such courtly and military grace?" asked Guy of Louis, as they stood watching this new arrival descend from his chaise.

"I fain would know," replied Louis; "he appears like an officer, all bedecked in military magnificence, 'out braving Mars himself.'"

"Only see, with what cordiality my Lord receives him. He's some grandee."

"Gold laced hat, dancing plumes and glittering baldric—an Irish General, by Ceres!" exclaimed Louis, as His Lordship and the new arrival strode by and crossed the area, stopping at the rose-covered bower where sat Kathryn and the Doctor.

The Earl introduced his friend as Major O'Connor,

of His Majesty's service, and gave him a seat near Kathryn and Doctor Godkins, requesting them to entertain him, while he himself went to seek his aunt, for whom the Major had enquired, saying:

"Now, Major O'Connor, if you will keep your seat here, with my cousin and Doctor Godkins, who will entertain you, I promise you I will soon find my aunt, who, I can assure you, will be glad to meet an old friend."

Doctor Godkins, almost concealed by the vines, leaned forward so as to be seen, and said:

"Major O'Connor, you know Mrs.—Mrs. O'Neal, then?" He had never called her name, and now pronounced it with some hesitation—softly.

"I' faith I knew her well in Lieutenant O'Neal's lifetime. We were thrown together much"—The Doctor drew back among the vines, and rested heavily against the back of the seat. Major O'Connor continued: "But have never met her since a few days after he fell, now fifteen years. He fell gallantly fighting for the cause. I was but a lad then, nineteen years of age, and was Second Lieutenant in the company. We were both under Captain Shane, who, poor man, was killed on the field the same day. My Captain and Lieutenant both falling in the same engagement, I was forced to take command. Yes," he continued, though no one had spoken, "the whole responsibility now devolved on me. In the midst of a brisk engagement I was forced to take Captain Shane's place. You may guess, chap as I was, it made my head swim to think of my responsibility in leading the company out of that melee; but, sure, we came out victorious. The Captain's wife and Mrs. O'Neal were great friends, as was very natural, thrown together as they were, and their husbands being killed both at once, appeared to cement their friendship in a closer bond. When Mrs. Shane—

poor, delicate creature—fell ill of grief, most likely Mrs. O’Neal, kind heart—like a ministering angel, hovered over and nursed her, taking all care of her and the little girl babe, just two years old, until she died—Mrs. Shane, I mean—of grief, no doubt—then Mrs. O——” Now the voluble Major was interrupted, for at this juncture the Earl reappeared with Mrs. O’Neal. The Major sprang to his feet and clasped her hand, saying, as he gazed into her face:

“Can this be Mrs. O’Neal?”

“Charlie!” she exclaimed; “can this be Charlie O’Connor? Oh, how glad am I to see you again!” They shook hands warmly. The Earl gave her a seat beside the Major, where they sat in mutual admiration, each complimenting the other on youthful appearance and good looks.

“You remember, Charlie, our last parting?”

“What a sad parting was that!”

“I, with the two babies——”

“Sure! The Captain’s baby—your protégé, Mistress O’Neal—what became of the sweet little darling? Sure, she was the darling of the camp, and the Captain’s delight!”

“Oh, she is with me still; I have kept her always, as her mother requested. There was no one else to care for her save her grandmother, who was old and feeble, and who soon died. I have had no trouble to keep her, and she has been a real comfort to me.”

“But how blooming and happy you are looking now, Mistress O’Neal! I declare, I can scarcely believe you to be the same—so happy and bright! I always thought you sad-looking, though the war caused so much sorrow those days.”

“And you, Charlie; have never married?”

“Oh, pshaw! No. An officer in the army scarcely has time to think of marrying, though I am old enough, I should think, at thirty-four.”

"And growing gray, Charlie; your dark locks are a little tinged with gray."

"Yes; while your soft hair remains just the same. And yet——"

"And yet I am near two years your senior."

"And, Mistress O'Neal, where have you been all those years? And Rorey and Nora—where are they?"

"I remained ten years in Ayr, after you, with your company, left. Then my father died; my mother had died some years before. My brother, the Baron of Weirwolf, sent for me to come to him at Weirwolf, his country-seat. For the past two years Rorey has been with his cousin, the Earl of Fleetwood, under a good tutor, while Nora and I have lived in Edinburgh, where I have kept her in a fine school, and can say I am not ashamed of either of my children. On the contrary, am rather proud of them."

After the Earl had given Mrs. O'Neal a seat and left her, Kathryn made repeated efforts to carry on a conversation with the Doctor, all to no purpose; he appeared to be absorbed. She exerted herself, but he was distrait. He could not draw his mind away, but eagerly drank in all that was being said by the happy couple so near him, yet without intending to listen, Mrs. O'Neal knowing not of his presence.

"Doctor, how much longer will you sit here as one paralyzed; nor move, nor speak?" asked Kathryn presently, growing tired, and not feeling interested in the conversation of the two friends.

"Fifteen long years! Fifteen long years!" he groaned, in a smothered voice, Kathryn just able to catch his words.

"Well," said she, "if it is so long I will leave you to your fate and seek a more congenial partner." On her departure, the Doctor, drawing his hat over his face, lounged full length on the seat, oblivious of all but the pleasant voices of the two beside him, he

being shut off from them by a screen of vines. Here he lay, helplessly listening while they continued their conversation.

Kathryn met Rorey and told him of the handsome Major O'Connor, who was with his mother, who had asked about himself and Nora; so he must go see who it was. His mother, getting a view of him as he stood at a distance scrutinizing the stranger, called him to her, and said: "Rorey, this is Major O'Connor, of whom you have heard me speak. You may remember him."

"Oh! Is this the same cunning little Rorey? Sure, how he has grown to full manhood—almost!"

"I do remember him," said Rorey. "Captain O'Connor put me on his horse once, and held me on to have a ride."

"Oh, yes; yes!"

"And how frightened you were, too, Rorey. Oh, ho! ho! ho!" laughed the Major, so jollily. "Rorey, I trust that we shall be friends, although our forefathers fought each other for years as independent princes for the supremacy in Ireland. Roderic O'Connor of Connaught disputed the supremacy with Thurlow O'Neal, who assumed the title of King of Ireland. But surely we may be good friends, Rorey boy; let bygones be bygones. Now what say you to this?"

"Major O'Connor, I am willing to be your friend in all things, in so much as I know that my father and you were good friends," Rorey replied, smilingly, returning the pressure of the Major's hand.

"Now, Rorey, run off and fetch Nora," said Mrs. O'Neal.

"A noble fellow! No wonder you are proud of him, Mistress O'Neal," said the Major, as Rorey set out with alacrity to inform Nora that Captain O'Connor, of whom they had heard so much, was come, and

that he was now Major, and no longer Captain O'Connor. He found Nora romping on the beach with Edith Langhorn and Julien.

"Come, oh, come, Nora!" he called; "there's a handsome and splendidly dressed Major—a military man—wishing to see you, and has sent me to fetch you."

"Oh, Rorey, how you talk, now! To see me?"

"Yes, yes! Why should he not want to see you? He knew your father and mother, and played with us when we were wee babies."

"Sure, Rorey; are you fooling me?"

"Not in the least. Come!"

He took her hand and led her on, but when they had approached quite near she said:

"Let go my hand, Rorey; you need not be leading me, as you did when we were children; we are grown-ups now."

"Aye; but, Nora, you have been away from me so long," he said, giving her hand a good squeeze before he let go. "Here she is, mother."

All rosy she came from a romp in the grove, where, in her mirth, she had been, like a young gazelle, gracefully bounding over the mossy heather—fair and rosy, with pouting lips, and hair of pale spun gold. Sprightly, sylph-like, she stood before him, mischief sparkling in her laughing eyes; a perfection of young girlhood, who had just attained that age at which she felt she must, perforce, act the lady.

Major O'Connor, surveying her with astonishment and evident admiration, seized her hand and said:

"My faith; is this, then, the little darling whom we all loved so much? Ah, Nora, sure you won all hearts when a little thing; how is it now? You slay them right and left, no doubt!"

"Nora, this is our old-time friend Major O'Connor," said Mrs. O'Neal, as she rose and gave Nora

a seat beside him that they might have a talk, while she and Rorey went to seek Lady Hawren.

Captain Arranton was walking aimlessly about when Louis met and accosted him:

"Where now, my gay gos-hawk? 'With all good grace to grace a gentleman,' you present a melancholy appearance, Captain."

"Oh, 'tis nothing, 'tis nothing; only a passing shadow," returned the Captain, mopping his brow with a dainty handkerchief.

"I thought, i' faith, you were in love. Indeed, your appearance suggests a lovesick swain. You should be more independent, Captain. An' you love a lady, and she loves you not, you should not care. Why, if I love a girl and 'she love me not, I care not. What! Shall I look pale because the maiden blooms; or sigh because she smiles on others? Not I, by heaven! I hold my peace too dear.'"

"Come, Mr. Kearney; you know not the complications."

"Ah; there's little Flora going to sing for my Lord Gray. Oh! 'She is like a beautiful rose which, after a beautiful daybreak, expands its leaves to the first rays of the sun.' See, she raises the lute which hangs by her side. She touches the strings with exquisite grace, and presents at this moment an ethereal picture, in her evening toilet of soft drapery, like 'woven snow,' her sunny curls falling adown her snowy neck; her eyes are forget-me-nots; while

'The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp! her eye in heaven,
Would thro' the airy region stream so bright,
That birds would sing and think it were not night.'

"Behold, how she sits beside the noble Lord, like a sunbeam in a spring morning! Hark! Her voice is like that of a Syrian nightingale; and you know, Captain,

it is said to have the sweetest voice of all God's creatures! Lilies and roses; a blue eye; a cherry lip; a dainty——"

"There, sir; I will hear no more of thy praises!"

"Well, then, Lord Gray will appreciate them; for, by Ceres! he loves her; and no wonder. She's loved by all who know her——"

"Cease, cease; leave me to my own reflections!" Louis turned away, leaving the Captain walking up and down, "full of rumination sad."

Now Kathryn had just left the Doctor's side, in disgust at his mental condition, and, seeing Edwin, blazing in his new uniform, his sword clanking about his heels, walking in a grove to one side and wearing that look of "languor and listlessness of a person deeply in love," she went to his side and said:

"Cousin, I am glad to find you, but what can have happened to you, dear boy? This morning I thought I had never seen one wearing a happier expression; now you have the appearance of a rejected lover. Has the lovely Miss Bruneau turned against you? Surely not; for she adores the young Captain, and apparently does not think him any too youthful for herself. What have you done with yourself all day that I have not seen you, save at the noon meal on the greensward; then you seemed devoted to Miss Augusta? What you can see or how you can be interested in that prim and peevish old maid I cannot understand." And she looked him squarely in the face. He was looking afar, and in a dreamy manner he exclaimed:

"'A blue eye; a cherry lip!' Ye Gods——"

"What! She has no 'blue eye' nor 'cherry lip.' She's just a lean, tall, angular figure, with false curls, lank drapery, flounces and furbelows."

"Her voice is sweeter than the 'trill of the nightingale in Persian valley.'"

"Cousin! What? Do you really admire the old maid?"

"She has explored the nearest passage to my heart! My love for her amounts to idolatry. Oh, that she were but wholly mine, an idol would she be, worshipped both day and night. Think of the bliss!"

Kathryn studied his face. He looked haggard. Instead of the side tresses and queue in which he had seemed to take such delight, his dark auburn locks fell in disorder over his shoulders. His eyes were fixed on the starry heaven; he paid no heed to her.

"Am I distraught; or is everyone else so? Surely, Edwin, you are beside yourself! Indeed, if you are so in love with this beauty, go find her, for I walk not with a man who pays no attention to me, but lets his thoughts run wild and his tongue proclaim the praises of another," she said, turning away; and soon, coming face to face with Louis, cried:

"Ho, Mr. Kearney; how is it with you? Do you enjoy the scene?"

"I am glad to meet with your Ladyship! The scene? Why, 'tis the sweetest on earth! 'Not that sweet grove of Daphne by Orontes and the inspired Castalion Spring, might with this paradise of Eden strive.'"

"And, Louis, have you seen anyone since the evening set in who seemed to be the least bit in love?"

"Why, my Lady! In fact, I have met with none, saving your Ladyship, but who appeared to be entirely so! The glen is all love and light; there's enchantment everywhere; and Cupids here amid the summer groves are numerous as leaflets on the trees. Here are lovers plenty, who know the heart-touching power of a sigh or a gentle song accompanied with the soft notes of a lute. And there are Nymphs, too, who, 'like nightingales, their lovesick ditties sing.'"

"Have you happened to meet Doctor Godkins?"

"No, my Lady; I see him nowhere astir."

"He's distraught! I left him but now, sitting inside a lovely bower. I did but ask him how long he would sit there, and he murmured, in a sepulchral voice, as one in a dream: 'Fifteen years; fifteen long years!' Now what think you of that, Mr. Kearney?"

"Indeed, and if that be love, he is far gone."

"And Edwin; have you met him?"

"I have, my Lady; and he's raving."

"Raving? Yes, raving! And all about Miss Bruneagh. What think you of that, Mr. Kearney?"

"Miss Bruneagh! Surely you do but jest!"

"No; he raves about her deep 'blue eye and cherry lip'——"

"She's a 'too overblown flower' for me. Tut, tut! Your Ladyship is misled. I know of whom he raves; I probed him but now, myself. 'A blue eye, a cherry lip!'" (Aside) "Ah, that touched him!" "But what new arrival is yonder? What a magnificent coach-and-six! See, my Lord hastens to greet him. Oh, Lord Hawdon's turnout! There's his sister, the Baroness."

"His sister? Is she married, Louis?"

"No, my Lady; a widow—a gay one at that. 'As full of spirits as the month of May, and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer.' Old Sir Peter Brundridge died some two years ago and left her a widow, gifted with the rich beauty of a Southron; graceful manners, exalted rank, and immense wealth. But see; the moon in its full now rises in all splendor! The 'refulgent lamp of night,

" 'O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light.' "

But Kathryn was watching the Earl as he very courteously assisted the plump Baroness to alight, and gave her a most cordial greeting.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FETE CHAMPETRE—CONTINUED.

"All, all was luxury;
All must be luxury, where Lyæus smiles.
His locks divine
Were crowned
With a bright meteor-braid,
Which like an ever-springing wreath of vine,
Shot into brilliant leafy shapes,
And o'er his brow in lambent tendrils played;
While, mid the foliage hung,
Like lucid grapes,
A thousand clustering buds of light,
Culled from the garden of the galaxy."

THE Earl, with a retinue of attendants, had met Lord Hawdon and his sister, the Baroness, with much warmth. The Baroness was gushingly happy, and said:

"Oh, my Lord! I am most happy to meet you once again, and amid such lovely surroundings. This scene is entrancing, and appears as the Feast of Lights of some great Mandarin. And how have you been, my Lord? Why, I have not had the pleasure to see you since the court ball last winter, when you were summoned so unceremoniously from my side," she was saying, as he led her to a sofa upholstered with the richest velvet; where, seating her, he stationed two maids behind her with waving fans of glittering peacock's feathers, and seating himself beside her, with a marked degree of grace and courtesy, he said, regarding her flushed and happy face:

"I am rejoiced, Lady Hermione, to see you looking so well."

"Oh, my Lord; you mean that I look healthy and stout?" with an inquiring glance; for she was of good size, inclining rather to embonpoint, or plumpness. She was voluptuous, soft, dainty; and had a richness

of warmth and color. "Thank you; my health is good since coming to the Manor. This is indeed an excellent and most healthful country, and I do not see any reason why I should not remain here always."

"Oh, Lady Hermione, you misconstrue my meaning altogether; you really are more handsome than I remember to have seen you. I am sure you grow more lovely——"

"Oh, there, there; my dear Lord! How you flatter one!" she said, blushing like any girl. "But, my! Who is that sweet maiden, naiad or nymph in company with Lord Gray; to whom my brother, Lord Hawdon, is now speaking; with sunny locks and such heavenly eyes—in snowy tulle over a sky-blue satin petticoat?"

"My sister, Lady Hermione."

"Your sister, my Lord? I knew not that you had a sister."

"Oh, my Lady; she is my foster-sister. We were brought up by the same mother."

"Then, my Lord; the superb one by her side, wearing a costume of figured satin, of ivory whiteness, who is now looking, coquettishly, up into Lord Gray's face—with such a wealth of dark-brown curls?"

His face was suffused, but Lady Hermione did not observe it, for she was looking at Kathryn.

"She is Lady Hawren's daughter—my cousin, Lady Kathryn Arranton, of Hawren."

"Oh, what a charming grace! There! Lord Gray is introducing my brother; she is speaking now to him. Oh, what a handsome couple they would make! With what admiration he seems to regard her—he manifests much pleasure. Oh, if George only would marry such a girl! Ah, see, they walk away together! She is as graceful as a sylph." Looking suddenly up into the Earl's face, she beheld with what earnest gaze his eyes followed after the graceful couple as they

walked forth in the moonlight and disappeared adown a charming vista.

"Ah, my Lord; I suspect——" He met bravely the questioning glance from her bright eyes.

"Suspect what, my Lady?"

"She may be your affianced."

"No, Lady Hermione; I can say with all sincerity no lady has ever promised me her hand."

"No? My Lord, you looked after her with manifest admiration."

"I admit, Lady Hermione, I do admire handsome women."

Her fine eyes fell before his intense gaze.

"My Lord, 'tis more than most men of your age can say, to assert that you have never had a woman's promise. You would not pretend to say that you have never learned to love; that you have not loved a dozen pretty girls ere this."

"Honestly, not a dozen."

"Then, mayhap you do love one." Her soft eyes met his with a bewitching and melting expression. A crimson glow spread over his fair Saxon face, and his bright eyes expressed much love, for he was thinking of Kathryn as he murmured softly:

"I confess there is one——" He paused. She trembled, and asked:

"Whom you *do* love?"

"With all the ardor of my soul," he said passionately. She toyed with her fan like a bashful girl, her hand trembled as she asked:

"Then, she—my Lord, she loves you?"

"Oh, who can read the secrets of a woman's heart?"

"Do not the eyes, my Lord, sometimes reveal the inmost thoughts? Do they not convey the intelligence?" she murmured softly, with a tender glance.

"Woman's eyes are deceiving; one moment they may express the deepest love, the next they will flash

with scorn and disdain, and she will bid you leave."

"No, no, my Lord; where a woman truly loves, there is no such vacillation. There is nothing more constant than a woman's love," she said, with a sigh. He also sighed deeply.

"Why that melancholy sigh, my Lord?" flashing him a soft glance.

"If you loved one, you should not fear to tell her."

"Indeed, I would! Man is a coward when it comes to declaring his love, especially when he feels confident of being rejected."

"Who would have taken you, my Lord, for such a coward! You should, at least, declare your love——"

"Has not a woman the same ability to read the heart as has a man?"

"Perhaps not. I would I had the power to read your heart and know who 'tis you so fondly love—if you could confide in one whom you know to be your friend——"

"Alas! I have no friend who can help me. I scarcely dare to raise my eyes to one of so much beauty and such superb grace——"

"Oh, tell me her name! I would most gladly——"

At this moment they were invited to the feast. How she regretted being disturbed at this supreme moment! How lovingly she leaned upon his arm as he conducted her to the well-loaded table! The subject of conversation was changed, and with all her art she could not induce him back to it; for now it dawned upon his mind that she had been misled; that, while his whole mind and soul were devoted to Kathryn, Lady Hermione had dared to hope that his love was hers. And he was too noble and honest to wish to deceive her. But, as Lord Hawdon was devoted to Kathryn for the remainder of the evening, he exerted himself to the utmost for the entertainment of the Baroness. And after enjoying the bountiful repast he

led her to walk on the "lawny sands." Then in the open moonlight they sat on a causeus. She had met Kathryn, and now said:

"I so much admire your American cousin, my Lord."

"She is from America, my Lady; but is a native of France—Paris."

"It is said that French women, as a rule, are equipped with grace and vivacity which all the world would be glad to emulate. I am sure your cousin, in this line, proves true the saying. See with what inimitable grace she moves; her vivacity could not be excelled; she's brilliant—oh, she is coquettish, is she not? Now she accepts Lord Hawdon's arm, and is going with him. Oh, she has an *air elegant!*"

"It is said that gracefulness is an idea not very different from beauty, and consists in much the same thing."

"It is also said, my Lord, that beauty is the lover's gift; an object is said to be beautiful because it appears so to the observer. Your Lordship must be an ardent admirer of the beautiful."

"I believe that beauty is identified with the good, and it is said: Beauty of soul is manifested in a beautiful character, and true beauty of face is possible only where there is beauty of soul. And I do consider Lady Kathryn's a most excellent style of beauty, though hers is not, like Flora's, beauty unadorned. Flora is a natural beauty; she is perfectly lovely, under all circumstances and conditions, the same. Art in some cases 'lends to beauty.'"

"But, my Lord, to come up to your standard, not all of us could be considered beautiful; we may lack this goodness you speak of."

"That was a quotation, my Lady."

"You said you believed it."

"Well, I do. Goodness beaming from the counte-

nance indicates a beauty of soul, and renders the face of any more lovely."

"My Lord, someone says that the type of beauty differs in different nations."

"I know the ancients thought one to be beautiful must be fair. You, my Lady Hermione, being so fair, by them would have been considered a perfect beauty, as doubtless you are in the present age regarded by all who know you."

"Ah, my dear Lord, what an adept you are in the school of flattery! I can lay claim to no beauty, save in accordance to the Moorish standard; for with them corpulency and beauty are *synonyme*. And I have heard, or read somewhere, that a Moorish woman with even moderate pretensions to beauty must be so stout that she cannot walk without a slave under each arm to support her, while a perfect beauty is a load for a camel."

"Fair Lady, wouldst know thy destiny," said a croaking voice at Hermione's elbow. Lady Hermione started, with a little frightened shriek.

"Be not frightened, Lady Hermione," said the Earl reassuringly; "'tis but a gypsy mother who would read your future. Is it not true, mother?"

"True, my Lord; but cross my palm with a bright piece o' silver, and I will reveal thy destiny, fair Lady." The Earl dropped some coins in her extended palm. The old woman tossed back the long black tresses that flowed about her shoulders over her long bright scarlet cloak, which was confined at the waist with a sash or girdle of bright green. Lady Hermione, reassured by the Earl, extended her hand tremblingly. The gypsy, seizing upon it, said:

"Lady, thou art kind of heart and true. Thou hast had sorrow, but there is in store for thee much happiness. Thy pure heart will be given to one of high

degree, much honored and beloved, and thou wilt be his idol."

"Oh," said Lady Hermione, in a flutter, "this assurance is worth much! My Lord, extend your hand, and let us see."

"Fame, love, fortune await thee, my Lord; whom thou lovest thou wilt wed; she will make thee happy, and prove herself a famous wife and mother." Now approached Kathryn and Lord Hawdon. The gypsy, turning to Kathryn, said:

"Know, Lady, I have been endowed with the ability to disclose thy fate. Wouldst know thy future, but cross my palm with silver. I can open to you the secrets of fate."

"Take this," said Lord Hawdon, "and let us at once know the Lady's fate," dropping a bright piece of silver into the clawlike hand of the gypsy.

"No searching sorrow shalt thou know; no wearing grief; but a life of sunshine and shadows; smiles will quickly follow all your tears. There is a little coquetry in thy make-up, for which thou must suffer. A real lover is thy delight. A deadly enmity now prevails between two persons because of thee. A little self-willed thou art; but he whom thou shalt wed will govern thee with so much kindness and considerate firmness that thou wilt be most happy and make a model wife and mother. Orange blossoms are now growing to crown thee for thy bridal." Kathryn's face flushed, the Earl's was ruddy; Lady Hermione looked from one to the other. Lord Hawdon, extending his hand, broke in with:

"Come, come, Sibyl; I will cross thy palm twice for thee, should you read me a destiny to accord with this you have just read the young lady." And he thought: "How I should like to govern that sweet, self-willed one!"

"My Lord, my mouth is closed; or I read that I

see revealed in thy palm: Unhappy man; unstable, capricious! Thy destiny is to wed one whose heart will fondly cling unto another."

"Out upon thee for an old hag; thy tongue is loose at both ends and wags falsely. Betake thyself hence instantly!" cried Lord Hawdon, in a rage; and he and Kathryn walked on.

When time came for her departure, the Baroness declared with effusive praise, as the Earl handed her to her seat in her brother's stately coach, that she had never spent so delightful an evening in all her life. It had been too delicious, a perfect Elysium to her, even surpassing the fête they had enjoyed together in Paris on the occasion of the coronation of the young French King, which, she declared, had not given her one-half the pleasure she had experienced on this blissful occasion. She expected to remain some days yet at Hawdon Manor; and would not his Lordship bring his lovely cousin and his sweet foster-sister to visit her? "And, my dear Lord, I must confess to you how delighted I should be, could your sweet cousin love my brother. I feel that a union of the two families in *some* way would be most desirable." Then placing her hand in his, she said: "I hope to see you *soon*, my Lord." He raised her hand gently to his lips, and the coach soon swept out of sight.

With a sigh of relief, he turned straight to find Kathryn, thinking he would now enjoy a little of her society, then escort her back to the castle through the moonlit vista. We now return to the scene at the supper hour, and look in upon others of our party.

Many had gathered around the richly laid banquet tables loaded with luxuries; and all seemed young, with mirth and wit, love and joy.

With nods of approval and smiles of joy, the masculine portion of the throng quaffed the genial fluid which sheds around that bouquet so delicious to the

olfactions of wine-bibers, the ruddy wine, blushing in crystal goblets, soon to deluge both heart and brain, while countless menials throng in and out.

With moonlight and lamplight mingling overhead, what an intangible loveliness overspreads the scene! Al fresco dancing was at its height. When called to the feast, Louis, who had been looking on at the dancing, observed to Guy:

“‘Now from danse to sweet repast we’ll turn.’ Here’s the unrestrained festivity of the rustic youth and maiden.”

“‘Hark! The breathings of a flute’s soft notes I hear.’ An’ I were you, Louis, I should find out the sweet source—I’d seek out the fair nymph who pours forth such artistic melody.”

“‘How shall I dote on her with more advice, that thus without advice begin to love her.’ It gives delight to my ear.

“‘I’m all o’er love!

Nay, I am love. Love shot, and shot so fast,
He shot himself into my heart at last.’

“I’ll go seek the source of that silver-toned voice, and leave my duties here to my inferiors.” So saying, Louis strode away.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

LOUIS AND ROSA. FETE CHAMPETRE—CONTINUED.

“Oh! while this heart, bewildered, took
Sweet poison from her thrilling eye;
Thus would she smile, and lisp and look,
And I would hear and gaze and sigh.”

“HA, HA, HA!” Rosa’s silvery voice in laughter rang through the bosky dell. Near Chindara’s magic fountain she was seated on a green, mossy bank, in a becoming sylvan dress of sky-colored silk, over a

white satin petticoat; skirt short, as she usually wore it, scarce reaching the ankles of her red-heeled boots; bodice close-fitting and jaunty. Her short hair fell in curls about her neck and in bouffons, held in place by small combs set with flaming carbuncle or antheax placed directly over each ear. A French horn hung by her side, while in her hand she held a pretty pearl-mounted flute. Here, under the soft influence of the wimpling fountain's hidden music, she held her court. And here the boyish pages, on bended knee, in gay vests of variegated green and crimson hue, crimson sashes and lofty caps, whence dangled snowy plumes, who had been with her and Nora, tripping with fantastic tread through the mazy dance, were paying homage to her, as were a number of other swains, by whom she was surrounded; and there was a romantic charm about her, captivating all. When Louis made his appearance she called out to him:

"Art thou Dionysos, lord of the feast, fairer and brighter than the sons of men?"

"I am Dionysos, god of the revel, my Ariadne."

"And dost dispense the nectar and ambrosial fruits, my joyous wine-god; and hast neglected thy Ariadne?"

"True! Oh, my Ariadne, weep not thou here without food, but come with me and thou shalt find 'the festive mirth and wit that knows no gall!' Oh, my Ariadne, I have loved thee long! Come thou and sit whilst thy Dionysos shall serve thee."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Her merry laugh again rang out like the rippling of a waterfall. Louis led her to a charming table near, while Rorey and Julien attended Nora.

"Oh, what a blithe repast is here!" she cried. "A supper fit for the gods."

"Eat, daughter of Minos; and when thou hast supped shall not we then wander together on the

lawny sands and shelves where 'trip pert fairies and dapper elves'? Aye, into the moonlight we'll wander, 'mid the flowers, where we'll sit and list the sounds of sweet music; for to such 'harmony the stillness of the night is most becoming.' "

Louis, Rosa, Nora and the pages soon left the table and joined a group of merry ones, who surrounded the gypsy sibyl, and whose palms she had been reading. She was now speaking to Flora:

"Thou art a wild rose that blooms in the hedge by the wayside; of gentle nature, with a loving heart; a jewel without price. Thou wilt have grief, poignant, but of short duration; thence will your pathway be strewn with roses; for you will wed with the man whom you love so truly. He will give you an honored name, a title, wealth, and rank."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Rosa. "Lord Phantomfell, no doubt, Flora."

The gypsy turned to her, saying:

"Know, Lady, I am gifted with power to disclose thy future. I can open to you the secrets of fate, if thou but cross my palm with silver."

"Here, then," said Rosa, extending her hand, "disclose my fate; or but tell me if my lover loves me true."

"Thou art gentle, good-tempered, generous and pretty, but a wicked coquette; and thy coquetry thou wilt have cause to regret."

"But, good mother, is there one who loves me truly?"

"Lady, there is one who has loved thee truly since thy first meeting."

"Oh, I am rejoiced to hear that! It is all I wish to know. Ha, ha, ha!"

The gypsy now approached Miss Bruneau, who drew back, saying:

"No, no; I do not wish to have my future disclosed

here! Yet, I should like to know—yes, yes; tell me—all.”

“Lady, thou shalt marry for position, not for love. He whom you love will wed another. Whom you will marry is of fickle mind; but when once wedded to you he will be constant and true.”

“How nice of you, Miss Augusta, to change a fickle man to one constant and true!” said Nora, extending her hand to the gypsy.

“Here comes a chatterbox, a mirth-loving, happy disposition; looking on the bright side of everything. Ever hopeful, merry sprite, thou will marry a soldier, who will love thee dearly.”

“Ah,” sighed Rorey, “I must join the army at once!”

“And I,” said Julien, “shall enlist immediately.”

“Never mind,” said Nora; “there are soldiers without you.” And she flashed on them a soft smile.

“Oho!” returned Rorey. “The gallant Major! Ha, ha, ha!”

“He, he, he!” laughed Julien.

The gypsy fortune-teller now spied Edwin, who stood at a distance in a most dejected manner regarding the group of merry young people, and went immediately to him. It required some persuasion on her part to even get a glimpse into his palm. But with a mere glance she said:

“Noble sir, though now in deep despair with hopeless love and almost overcome with melancholia, there is in store for thee great happiness; for you will wed the lady of your choice—someone here, perhaps,” she said, looking around and waving her hand toward the little group. “There’s a dark day before you; but hope’s bright wings are fluttering over, and you shall prosper.”

“Now, Mr. Louis, we will have yours,” said Rosa.

“Never, never! My future is a sealed book, un-

less"—he said, tucking her hand in his arm and walking away—"you reveal it yourself."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm no gypsy to reveal your future, Mr. Kearney; I am not gifted in that line," she returned saucily.

"Your fairy godmother, it would seem, showered upon you at birth rich and varied gifts; then cannot you tell me whether my little sweetheart loves me?"

"Oh, when I do not even know that you have a sweetheart—but I do know that you have not!"

"You malignant sprite, to say so, when I am ready to throw myself at your feet and pledge you my faith for life! Yes; ready to pledge you, even according to the practice of the natives of the beautiful land of Kathay, by saying: 'Black is the hair that now crowns our head; yet, when it has become as white as the fibres of the onion root, we shall still be found faithful to each other.'"

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Rosa, her face flushing with pleasure.

The moon had reached the zenith, the stars twinkled in the sky. They could hear the gushing of the fountain, the warbling of voices, the dipping of oars. Rosa's face was radiant with anticipation; but Louis said no more, save:

"Little sweetheart, you are a *rara avis*; your love and your beauty would be a great gift to any man." Then seeing the crowd dispersing, they walked on toward the castle, only chatting about the people they had seen on this occasion. But in that witching hour there still was another scene enacted.

"Oh, music, thy celestial flame
Is still resistless, still the same;
And faithful as the mighty sea
To the pale star that o'er its realm presides,
The spell-bound tides of human passions rise and fall
For thee."

Melody from the minstrels' gallery was stealing with entrancing sweetness on the ear. The fairy scene went on—eating, drinking, music and laughter. Graceful nymphs glided in and out among the sylvan bowers. The bright full moon was high overhead.

Edwin had not been near Flora since the morning hour, when they together had gone so joyously to the beach. She had seen him at supper, apparently very attentive to Miss Bruneau, anticipating her every wish. Again he had passed her amid the throng, merely lifting his hat and bowing with a sickly smile. Now it was the soft, the magic hour of midnight. Soon the scene would close and all retire to rest.

Never was a scene more bewildering, or music more entrancing. She had sung for Sir John Gray, accompanying her voice with the silvery tones of the lute; then he had attended her to supper, and never had a lover paid more devoted attention to the queen of his soul. She had received, indeed, more attention than she desired; for an undefinable unrest had taken possession of her. Her breast was filled with an unaccountable longing and yearning. After the gypsy had read her fortune, growing listless and tired, she withdrew from the throng, and dropped upon a sofa, where she sat half reclining, her hands over her eyes. And lulled by the tender strains of minstrelsy, she remained concealed by the flecking shadows. Soon she hears footsteps, then a tramping up and down not far away. She sat still, feeling secure in her shadowy retreat, so overcome with her own thoughts she gave no heed to aught else.

Edwin had left the gypsy fortune-teller, and, retiring to a grove, walked up and down, while thus unto his soul he said:

"The music of thy sweet voice still dwells on mine ear. Sweet echoes of the past, happy hours recalling, when in absorbing bliss I sat beside thee, without a

thought of care! Oh, in what blissful ignorance I then reveled, visited by no such galling, sickening thoughts as now crowd upon my maddened brain! Leave her! Not love her! Only a delicate friendship, suggests my aunt. Ye gods! Is friendship then so sweet?" After a pause in his soliloquy, during which he walks up and down like a raging lion, he addresses himself: "Oh, Edwin, art thou an Arranton? Where is thy pride? Must a long and unsullied lineage die in thee? It shall not be! Dear aunt, thou hast assailed me in my weakest spot. Oh, what horror overwhelms my soul, when upon my mind rushes the vision of that villainous smuggler, an outlaw to the nation, a robber on the high seas; a dishonorable, disreputable scoundrel, vulgar and coarse! True, dead he is; and she has never seen him, never known him, never called him father; but think of the consanguinity, the characteristic qualities transmitted by descent! A gentleman of blood and breeding—honorable birth—joined to one descended from impure blood, the transmission of a bloodthirsty nature! Oh, I could never ask her to be mine! That horrid vision would intervene and chill the marrow in my bones. Oh, I am, indeed, in a straight! My pride forbids that I should wed the sweet creature. And I must never speak to her again, save to bow and smile in passing, as I have done this day—which has seemed to me an age in length—and such an out I do make of it, trying to smile when my heart is dead within me. I fancy 'twas like the smile of a dead man. But my family pride forbids; yet she loves me, she as much as admitted—so honest, so gentle, she cannot conceal it. Yes, I have won the love of the sweetest flower that ever bloomed! Is pride to crush that Heaven-implanted love? Is it honorable to win her love then cast it away for pride? By Heaven, no! Suppose she loves as do I; and 'tis said that woman's love is

deeper, more lasting than man's; must she be left to suffer as I now do? God have mercy on my darling, the daughter of a smuggler! What conflicting thoughts do fill my brain! I cannot live!" Uttering a deep groan, he plunged through the growth intervening between the place where he walked and the sofa whereon Flora sat.

Roused from her own thoughts by a deep groan, and starting up, she beheld Captain Arranton, arms folded upon his breast and head bowed down in a most dejected manner. Uttering a little cry, she sank back on the seat, her heart beating tumultuously, almost overcome by her feelings.

On seeing her, he exclaimed:

"Flora, you here? Have I frightened you?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Forgive me, will you—can you?"

"Oh, yes; certainly, sir!" she said. He stood a while as if undecided.

"May I not sit here beside you?" She signified assent by moving a little to one side.

"Why are you here alone? I thought you were promenading with Sir John Gray."

"No, no! I was so—I felt so——"

"So what, my—my—little friend?"

"So tired of everything, and—and, wishing to rest, I came hither." Then looking up into his face, she asked: "Are you ill? Why did you groan?"

"Oh, I have been ill—I—have suffered!"

"I am sorry."

"Have I, then, your sympathy in my—in my illness?" His honest soul was unused to prevarication.

"I assure you that you have, Captain."

"I thank you much. You are my friend. Sweet, gentle friend, how I love—your friendship!" he cried impulsively, taking her hand and pressing it to his lips. She withdrew it instantly; he had appeared so

distract of late. The shifting moon now looked through an opening between the boughs overhead and revealed to him her radiant face in all its beauty. She was exquisite, bright as an angel; her sunny locks fell in curls down her shoulders. She raised her lovely eyes to his. He spoke not; but in his raptured soul he thought: "Oh, what bliss to have once more those lovelit eyes beam into my own with all their comforting sweetness! Idol of my dreams, how blessed am I to look once more into those innocent, soul-thrilling eyes that burn their way, like molten fire, into my inmost soul!" "Flora, dear friend, why sit you so silent?"

"How sadly sweet the music is to-night!"

"Love you the sad, sweet strains? Flo—sweet friend, is't *that* makes the tears tremble on your eyelids, like dewdrops on the flowers?"

"I have ever loved sad music."

"I love nothing that would bring tears to your glorious eyes."

"Are you not sad, Captain Arranton? What grief has caused the unhappiness which manifests itself upon your brow?"

"Have you never heard, sweet friend, that when happiness is greatest grief is lurking near? I have been too happy."

"Can one be too happy?"

"Too happy, Flora, when happiness is the harbinger of sorrow. Like the bright rainbow, its vivid colors burst forth to gladden our hearts with its glorious beauty; then come the dark clouds to obscure the bright vision, and the torrents of rain represent our tears."

"When first we met, only a few days ago, you were so happy I thought you could never look sad."

"When first we met I knew no sadness."

"Surely I have not caused you to be unhappy, Captain?"

"No, sweet friend; no! Shall we not wander forth into yon moonlit glen?" They rise and wander forth under the "bliss-loving moon," and through a long vista of sparkling and trembling lights. Night birds sing sweetly overhead; her voice falls sweetly on his ear, each note awakening anew the deep passion surging in his breast; and, like a shower of living fire, words of love fell from his burning lips. They continue to promenade until the scenes begin to close; then he conducts her to the great hall, where he had opportunity to say:

"Good-night, my Flora. May every joy this bright world holds be shed on thee. Calm be thy slumber, pure as angels' thoughts be thy dreams." And gallantly pressing her hand to his lips, he left her, and retired for the night, repeating in his heart:

"Whate'er thou art, this heart adores thee still."

We will now look back on the moment when the Earl had bidden farewell to the Baroness and turned to seek Kathryn. He found her seated in the same little bower where he had seen her with Doctor Godkins; but she was now alone and sad. On seeing him, she assumed a great dignity of manner. Raising his hat, he said:

"May I not sit here beside your Ladyship?"

"Really, my Lord, can you wish it?"

"Assuredly," he said, as he sat down. She remained in silent dignity.

"How liked your Ladyship my Lord Hawdon?" he asked at length.

"My Lord, I was delighted beyond measure with his charming manners," she returned, with a degree of levity.

"Glad am I that you like his Lordship, while I must admit you are easily pleased, my Lady."

"Charmed, my Lord; charmed! He's the pink of men! His light green coat, covered with the newest and best of embroidery, was bewitching. And what with a roseate spot on each pale cheek, suggesting the rouge-spot, he was irresistible. I was delighted! Even the points of his moustachios were dyed red; besides, I must admit, I always had a penchant for dark eyes. Then, my Lord, the white lace draped over his dainty, ringed hands was superb, and gave him an *air grande*."

"Will your Ladyship allow me to again suggest you are easily pleased?"

"My Lord," she asked, with dignity, "is he not an high-toned and honored gentleman, of one of the best families?"

"Of a good family, I admit. He is honored, my Lady, and feared; but little loved by any."

"Ah," she sighed, "he appears lovable enough, my Lord!"

"Your Ladyship should be careful not to love him, anyway."

"Not love him, my Lord?" she asked archly.

"No. It is said he is to marry a distant cousin, according to an agreement entered into by her father and his," he returned.

"I should dislike to be forced to marry one whom I could not love."

"He is not forced to this union; but in case he refuse to wed the young lady, he forfeits a fine estate, besides a vast sum of money from her uncle, the Marquis de Sainte Veran, Archbishop of Paris."

"My Lord, do you think he will do it? He seems not the kind of man to be managed in this way; he is too charmingly independent."

"No; unless, on meeting her he should be well pleased, for they have never met and are not to meet

until she is eighteen; then he is to marry Lady Leda de Cherrier or not, as he please."

"My Lord, suppose she, on meeting Lord Hawdon, should refuse to carry out the agreement "

"In that case he is to receive the whole estate."

"In case they both refuse, my Lord?"

"The estate will go, at the death of the old Marquis, with his vast wealth and his title, to a hair-brained nephew."

"My Lord Hawdon will never yield to this strategem for marrying off, possibly, an undesirable person," she declared testily.

"My Lord Hawdon's income is not so ample but he may be willing thus to increase it, however undesirable——"

"There! You shall not speak thus of my friend, to me, at least—excuse me!" She rose and dashed away, joining Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal, who were walking on toward the castle.

The Earl stood for a while transfixed; then, with a profound sigh, he followed slowly on.

The festivities had continued, without cessation, until midnight; the guests had begun to depart; and, to use the words of one of our sweetest writers, "the solemn hour of one had long since sounded on the ebon ear of night" ere the magnificent scenes closed. And this fête was pronounced by all a brilliant social event, a grand success.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN THE GROTTA.

"Slumber, oh slumber, if sleeping thou makest,
My heart beat so wildly, I'm lost if thou wakest.
Breathe not, oh, breathe not ye winds, on her cheeks,
If mute thus she charm me, I'm lost when she speaks."

ON the following morning, after the chaplain had held prayers in the great-hall, the Earl led the way to the dining room with Mrs. O'Neal and placed her near Lady Hawren at the foot of the table. As he returned to the upper end of the table he met the other couples entering.

Captain Arranton was with Rosa; Guy handed Lady Kathryn to her place at the Earl's right, Julien placing her chair. Major O'Connor accompanied Nora; he joked and she quarreled all the way. Louis placed Flora beside Kathryn. After all had been placed according to their stations, Mr. Galbraith, the visiting clergyman, said grace.

Major O'Connor, who sat near the Earl, asked:

"How are you feeling, my Lord, after the successful termination of your grand fête champetre?"

"Why, I can assure you, Major, I am feeling not at all well."

"How is this, my Lord, after such a rich time as we had? I should expect to find you resting in blissful satisfaction."

"Truth of it is, Major, I could not sleep, but spent a restless night."

"Oho, troubled with insomnia! Indeed, then, you should have at once set about reading a Psalm or repeating a prayer."

"I did not know that reading Psalms or prayers would act soporiferously."

"Indeed, then, I once had a friend who was a priest by the name of McEunish, who was much troubled with insomnia, and averred that he could not sleep. 'No odds on which side I turn,' he said, 'the divil a bit av slape can I get!' Upon this a good friar, who well knew the soporific virtue of his beads and breviary, said to him: 'Indeed, Father McEunish, I nivver slape soundly, save whin studying me sarmon or saying me prayers. Let us noo begin the sevin peniten-

tial Psalms, and see if you do not very soon enjoy the drowsy effect.' The idea pleased my friend McEunish well enough; so they began at the first of these Psalms, and by the time they had reached 'Beati Quartus' they were both sound asleep."

"Then, Major, you would advise the next time I am so troubled I should resort to this method of the good friar's in order to get some rest?" Turning suddenly toward Kathryn, he caught on her face a look of tenderest sympathy, which was immediately changed to a flush of indignation as their eyes met. But anger seemed only to awaken a new beauty in her dark eyes, which at once took on a darker dye, from the shadow of whose depths flashed forth an expression of her deep feelings. She felt a pang of jealousy which she could not repress. She had never realized anything like it before. She had been miserably piqued by his exclusive attention to the Baroness on the evening previous. Having felt that his love was all her own and that he was hers, if she would but speak the word, she had never dreamed of any one robbing her of him; and felt that it was just heaven to have him near and to receive his adoration, never realizing what would be the ultimate end. Though she loved him with all her soul, she was resolved never to break the promise she had made. Feeling thus piqued by his attention to the Baroness, she had flirted with Lord Hawdon, praised, and pretended great friendship for him, when really she cared nothing for him, in turn to pique the Earl. The conversation around the table continued; no one but the Earl noticed the angry flash of her eyes.

"What is your programme for to-day?" asked the Doctor.

"I think, Doctor, there's to be a dinner at the west end of the headland in a grove near the little grotto, where we dined yesterday. We are to have a dinner

of small game, and the boats are to be brought around for a visit again to the little Fairy Isle. I believe this arrangement suits the ladies?"

"Yes, yes!" all exclaimed, save Kathryn, who retained a dignified silence which none but the Earl observed.

On the beach some hours later the Earl said:

"Guy, I feel that I require an interval of rest, and will betake me to the grotto and respite me with a little sleep, while you and Captain Arranton will see to conducting the ladies over to the island and back. You will not be long gone?"

"No, my Lord; about two hours, then return to dinner," said Guy, as he started to fill his commission.

A little back in a "heavenly forest, dense and living green," men and women were engaged in baking and roasting meats for the noonday meal, which was to be enjoyed on the beach. Their lively jokes and merry laughter rung out over the waters.

A few paces up the strand Kathryn lay complacently among the cushions, fast asleep, in the grotto. She had been in a bad humor besides having headache. Her mother and companions had urged her to accompany them in the boat ride to the little Fairy Isle for lilies; but no, she was ill, had headache! After they had gone to the boats Marie went outside and walked sadly up and down along the sandy beach. She stopped and wept, wishing very much to go with the others; but was unwilling to leave her Mistress.

"Why, Marie! Why weep you here? What ails you? And why are you not with the other girls?" She turned quickly and met the Earl's sympathetic face. Drying her eyes, she said:

"Milord, Ee cannod go wiz ze ozzers."

"Why can you not go with the others, Marie? Where is your Mistress?"

"Milord, zhe ees een the leetle grotto; zhe haf ze headache, and zhe haf nod gone wiz ze ozzers; zhe ees nod well to go, and I must remain wiz her." And the poor girl again wiped her tears away. "Zhe tell me doo go on wiz dose, dat zhe iss not 'fraid here alone. But I me vill nod leaf her alone; seek, too." The Earl was all sympathy, and he said:

"Marie, you go; run along now; you are in plenty of time, for they have not yet started. Run along and go with them; I will remain here and let nothing trouble your Mistress."

"Oh, haf dey not yet starte?"

"No, no! You have plenty of time; run on! I will tell her you have gone."

The happy girl needed no second bidding; but bounded away, and reached the landing just in time to hop into the stern with Hortense, Hilda and Laura, and was not noticed by any of the others.

Up and down the gravelly beach paced his Lordship, his arms folded across his breast, his eyes upon the ground; and he said:

"I believe I have succeeded! She is angry—yes; she is jealous! I will know my fate; yes, this day! Promise? What promise, and to whom? I shall know! But, poor child, she is ill! I will but go now and tell her that Marie has gone, and will then call Phyllis to attend her here, if she needs any one. Yet I may find her in a better humor, and have a talk with her even now; else will wait till she does feel better. Ah, yes! I will get her in my little boat toward evening—she cannot remain angry long—and take her out to the little isle alone, and will know my fate. Yes, I will know what that 'promise' is."

Reaching the entrance to the grotto, he paused; for Kathryn, as we have said, lay sweetly sleeping among the cushions. As he gazed upon her he fell into a gentle rhapsody, thus: "Her eye is closed; sleep sits

upon her brow. She sleeps nor dreams of harm. 'Sleep give thee good rest!' Unto thy loving eye, my gentle friend, sweet and peaceful sleep has come that cometh not to me. And while thou sleepest softly I will watch and defend thee. 'Tis sweet to watch for thee—alone for thee.' 'Come, gentle dreams, the hour of sleep beguile,' to her for whom in vain I sigh. Oh, that I might watch to see thy waking smile! Beautiful sleep! But so like death, I tremble with affright! Awake, my angel, and chase away from me this fearful thought! Unclose thine eyes but for one moment on the light! No! Sleep give thee good rest! How divinely her long, dark hair floats over the pillow! She smiles—'tis some sweet dream. I must haste away ere she awakes. She would indeed be angry were she to open her eyes and find me here. I will walk up and down here until she shall wake, then will speak to her."

After walking a little he paused where a clump of wild-rose vines loomed up between him and the grotto where he had a view of the small island which now presented a fine spectacle. The boats were tied up, all had disembarked, and were moving hither and thither, stooping and bobbing about in the greatest glee, gathering flowers. Now and then he could hear their voices, raised to a high pitch. He started to walk again, his eyes bent upon the sand at his feet. Hearing a little shriek, he turned quickly, and saw a figure disappearing in the copse beyond the grotto. Badly frightened, thinking something had happened to Kathryn, he rushed to the entrance, and beheld her, standing, in the centre of the cavern, her hands clasped, her lovely hair streaming about her shoulders, a look of terror on her sweet face.

"What, oh, what has happened? Pardon, Lady Kathryn. What has frightened you?"

"Oh, my Lord!" she gasped. "I'm—so glad—you are here! It was a villain—the villain, my Lord."

"Where was he, Lady—cousin?"

"Oh, there, just where you now stand!"

"I saw him disappearing across the little streamlet here. Shall I pursue him?"

"Oh, do not leave us! I should die of fright!" She extended her hands to him. He took them, and said:

"Sit down and be composed; you are all of a tremor." He placed her on the seat and sat beside her.

"Tell me all about it—I feel that I should go in pursuit——"

"No, my Lord; no! Do not leave me!" she cried, clinging to him.

"Perhaps he meant no harm; he may be one of the peasants of the neighborhood."

"Possibly. My Lord, I thought you were on the isle. Have they returned?"

"No, not yet. Oh, I did not go with them!"

"Not go? Oh——"

"How is your head?" he asked solicitously. "You had headache?"

"I was so frightened—I believe it is better."

"You were going to tell me?"

"Yes, sir; I had a headache, and could not accompany them. I was not in a good humor, anyway."

"Your sweet temper was ruffled?"

"Yes, sir; so they left us. Marie is a sweet nurse. I lay down among the cushions, and she kneeled by me and rubbed my head so gently I soon fell asleep. I had not slept long when I had *such* a dream! I thought a wretch had caught me and was dragging me away. The dream so frightened me that I woke; and, opening my eyes wide, I beheld a villainous-looking man just stepping in the doorway as I woke. I knew

Marie was somewhere here, but was so frightened that I screamed. He looked around, and, appearing to see someone, fled. Where were you, my Lord?"

"I was not far off, walking on the beach."

"Oh, my Lord, how fortunate you happened to be so near; Marie and I would both have been frightened to death!"

"I had hoped that your dreams would be sweet and peaceful."

"Sir?"

"I saw you sleeping, and breathed a prayer to that effect."

"How—you saw me sleeping?"

"Yes, my Lady; and thought an angel could not appear to sleep more sweetly."

"Why did you come here, sir; to see me sleep?"

"My Lady, I came not to see you sleep; but found you sleeping. I came on an errand."

"What errand, my Lord?"

"I came to say that Marie has gone with the boat-party to the little Fairy Isle."

"No, no! You mistake, my Lord! She sits but outside here, with her fancywork; she wished to go, yet would not leave me."

"But I sent her, my Lady; she stood outside weeping, and when I asked her why she had not gone she said that you were ill and she could not leave you all alone. I bade her go, saying that I would assume her gentle office; in her absence would guard and protect you."

"You sent my maid away, and left me here alone!" She suddenly remembered that she was angry.

"Oh, not alone! For I walked the beach, nor stopped but for one moment, when I stood beside a clump of rose vines to note our friends on the isle culling flowers." Her cheeks flamed with indignation.

"My Lord, you have placed me in a ridiculous atti-

tude to send away my maid when I knew nothing of it, then come here to keep me company. Oh, what will my friends say? That I claimed to have headache and remained here alone to have a *tête-à-tête* with you. I—I——” She choked up with anger, remembering, too, how he had devoted himself to the Baroness, for which she was already indignant. “My Lord, I took you—I thought you to be a gentleman, sir!”

“My dear cousin, I implore pardon!” His voice was soft and reverent, as with courtly gallantry he raised her hand and would have kissed it but she wrenched it from him.

“I did not go to the island, my Lady,” he said; “but I supposed you had gone; and, feeling that I required a little rest, came here to recline me a little.”

“Then, sir, I regret very much that I was occupying your place and have deprived you of the rest you so much needed.”

“I beg to assure your Ladyship that I do not regret it; and would also assure you that nothing induced me to remain, instead of going with the boats party, but that I desired a little rest. And the reason why I sent Marie was because of my sympathy for the poor girl.”

“She was not compelled to stay, for I had told her she could go.”

“But, dear cousin, the good girl would not leave you alone; and when I assured her I would guard you from all harm she bounded away, happy as a bird. I have watched over you most faithfully, and when I turned on the ruffian he went crashing through the undergrowth; and glad was I to be near to render you this small service.”

“You have wronged me, my Lord!” she said, with an angry flash.

“My sweet cousin, your mood to-day seems fan-

tastic and changeful. But now you were almost overcome with gratitude that I should happen to be near you in time of trouble; then again you would that I had not come. In truth, I much believe some slight breeze hath ruffled your amiable temper, and that my Diana was sulking in her tent. Now, if I have wronged you, sweet cousin, on bended knee I will sue for pardon. Dear one, are you truly angry?"

"My Lord, I cannot—will not forgive you, though you sue on bended knee; you have offended beyond pardon, as your Lordship will find to your cost," she said, with great dignity.

"My Lady, I will go, and send Phyllis to you."

"You will please to leave me!"

A hot flush passed over his fine face. He rose to go, the bright masses of soft hair falling like floating rays of light around his broad shoulders, his handsome head held high in the air; and, with an air of extreme hauteur, he paused in the entrance.

She rose, her face and lips a livid crimson. With hat in hand he made a courtly bow, and she swept him a grand curtsey. With a soft, sad glance he passed from the broad entrance, while with kindling cheek and glance of fire her eyes followed him until the great clump of wild-rose vines cut off her view.

She was nervously sensitive; an involuntary shudder ran through her frame, and she sank upon the bank of cushions in a flood of tears.

As the Earl walked down the sandy beach he muttered:

"My sweet Xanthippe! My sweet Xanthippe! You shall find me no Socrates in patience and submission! I have been too gentle! I must have more force and more independence. How prudish the women are, and what high notions of propriety they have these days!" And drawing his hat over his face, he strolled

leisurely toward the grove, where preparations for a great feast were in progress.

Old Phyllis and little Sandy were out on one side picking some birds.

"Look heah, Honey, you hafter do dat wurk good or not at all; you jis git ebery pinfedder! Dese here birds is fur de quality ter eat, chile."

"Why, Miss Phyllis, this her'n is clean as't can be; hunly lookey."

"Giv't hur, chile! Humph! You call dat clean? Jes' look at de pinfedders! You 'spect quality gwine ter eat fedders? You triflin', no 'count——"

"Phyllis! Phyllis!"

"My Lord's a-callin' of yer, Miss Phyllis!" cried Sandy, whose eyes were everywhere save on his work.

"Sar bent, Master—my Lawd!" said Phyllis, as she rose and made an effort at a grand curtsy.

"Phyllis, you know where the little grotto is?" asked the Earl.

"Up heah, my Lawdship, whar de Ladyships goes ter res?" she asked, indicating the direction by pointing with her finger. "Yes, Master; dat li'le cave up dar, wid all dem pillers, an' sum churs an' a couch."

"Yes, Phyllis; your Mistress is there. She is ill and wants you to remain with her until her mother returns from the island."

"'Deed! Didn't my baby go wid her muther an' all the ress, Master—my Lawd?"

"No; she was not feeling well, and could not go. You will go and stay with her, Phyllis?"

"Dat I will, my Lawdship! Dat I will, Honey, go an' tec keer of my baby while she ma is gone!" And Phyllis hastened along toward the grotto, murmuring as she went: "I doan keer if I doan do nary nuther lick ob work to-day! I'se gwinter stay wid my baby-chile." She found Kathryn lying among the cushions, her hands clasped over her eyes.

"Why, bress my soul, Honey, what yer doin' here alone? I thought yer done gone wid my li'le Missy in de boat out yonder to de li'le ilun."

"No, Phyllis, I could not go; I had such a headache. I slept very little last night. I think that caused my head to ache so."

"Whar dat triflin' French gal? She dun gone an' leab yer?"

"You don't mind staying with me, Phyllis, do you?"

"Dat I doan, Baby! I doan keer ef I doan do a nuther thing to-day but stay rite here an' nuss my li'le Baby. Honey, what you want me to do fur you?"

"Bring me a little water, Phyllis, from the streamlet there; wet this handkerchief, and put it on my head."

"Dat I will, Honey! Dat I will!" Phyllis brought water, and, saturating the handkerchief, gave it a little squeeze, and after bathing Kathryn's flushed face folded it and placed it on her hot brow. Kathryn watched her motions interestedly; and when Phyllis seated herself and began to fan her, asked:

"Phyllis, who sent you here?"

"Why, bress you, Honey, 'twas my Lawdship, de gret Yearl! He tole me yo was here sick, Honey, all alone. Dat skand'lous Marie, to go off an' leab yer!" she said indignantly. "He des fine gent'mun, sho nuf!"

"Who, Phyllis?" she asked, knowing well enough, but wishing to draw Phyllis out and see what she would say.

"De Yearl, Honey; my Lawd Clifton; dat who! Da ain' nobody what kin kum up wid him, no dey ain't!"

"Phyllis, he's angry with me."

"What, now, Honey! What you been do to him ter mek him angry wid yer? He de finest gen'mun in de wurd!"

"He's offended, Phyllis!" And Kathryn put her hands over her eyes to hide her tears that rolled down in spite of her.

"Teck keer, Honey, you doan make him mad 'long of you for good an' always; I tell yer he's not de kine dat's gwine ter whine 'roun' a 'oman always. He not gwine ter stan' hit—he's too proud an' high-headed. You take keer, Honey; mine what I tell yer!"

Some time later, when the boating party had returned and were arranging for dinner, the Earl went to Mrs. O'Neal and said:

"Dear Aunt Mary, will not you arrange a dainty little repast on a tray and send it to Lady Kathryn, who is a little ill? She is in the grotto, and will not be out for the noon meal. I will take pleasure in assisting you." Then he arranged a selection of flowers which he placed in the centre of the tray, and, after adding an urn of Napoli di Malvasia, a sweet red wine, very delicate, having a peculiarly rich and delicious bouquet, he handed the tray to Marie, saying:

"Marie, take this to your Mistress; and mind that you put her in a good humor; will you, girl?"

"Oui—ess, ess, Milord! I will do zat!"



CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE VILLAIN.

"I rose anone, and thought I woulde gone
 Into the woode to hear the birdes sing,
 Whan that the misty vapour was agone,
 And clear and faire was the morrowing;
 The dewe, also, like silver is shining
 Upon the leves, as any baume swete,
 Till fiery Titan with his persant hete

Had dried up the lusty licour newe,
Upon the herbes in the grene mede,
And that the floures of many divers hewe,
Upon his stalkes gon for to sprede,
And for to splaye out hir leves in brede
Againe the sunne, gold-burned in his spere,
That doune to hem cast his beames clere."

IN the afternoon, when shadows were lengthening, Lady de Bruce with a train of damsels started for a walk adown a fairylike vista. And where the murmuring waters fell softly on the ear in a deep ravine that lay darkling in the shady dell upon a green, mossy bank all covered with flowers, the maidens sat them down, charmed by the splashing and gurgling of the brook.

Lady de Bruce, not caring to stop, continued walking on alone for a short distance, and just as she turned around a clump of coppice a rough and coarse-looking man appeared immediately in her path. Spell-bound, for a moment she gazed, then uttered a shriek. The man disappeared amid the undergrowth. On hearing the shriek, the maids ran to her assistance, and after she had told them of meeting with the man they hastened back with her to where the others were gathered on the beach, where she told them of the man she had met, who was a coarse-looking man and heavily armed, who, she supposed, was prowling about for no good.

A number of the men straightway armed themselves and started in pursuit. Now Lady de Bruce was found to be in a state of great excitement; and, fearing she might swoon, Lady Hawren and Mrs. O'Neal hastened with her to the little grotto, where she reclined among the cushions; for Kathryn was now out with Doctor Godkins in a small boat, pleasantly sailing toward the little Fairy Isle. Wiping her streaming eyes, Lady de Bruce said:

"Dear Mary, I have seen that man before!"

"Do you think so, Marjorie?"

"Oh, yes, yes! I know he is the same—the heavily armed man whom I saw on the beach eighteen years ago. I met him then, just as I did to-day. I was walking with my maids on the strand, watching a small brig some distance at sea. The nurse, with my little Majorie, just ten months old, was sitting on a mossy bank, looking off at the brig, while the maids and I walked away some distance. They gathered flowers and chatted pleasantly. I, thinking on my husband's absence, walked on, and as I turned round a clump of hawthorn I met, I am sure, the same I have just seen, a heavily armed man. I was badly frightened, and ran back to the maids, where I sank down from sheer fright. Then thinking of the nurse with my babe, we ran hurriedly to the spot where they had been left; and were horribly frightened to find the nurse lying prone upon the ground as if dead, and my child nowhere to be seen."

"Was the nurse killed?" asked Lady Hawren.

"No; there was a great contusion on her head, showing that she had received a heavy blow and had been knocked senseless. When she regained consciousness we could get no account from her. It appears she had been struck without having seen the assailant, and the child carried off without her ever knowing it. We were frantic, and ran up and down, screaming; but there was no help near, for we were a full half mile from the Hall. When the thought dawned upon me that my little Majorie was indeed stolen, I swooned away, which made it all the worse; for the maids were wild with excitement and knew not what to do. But after a while one of them ran to the Hall and notified the servants, who came and searched the beach for miles; and reported they had seen no living soul, save two men far out on the sea

heading for the brig which we had seen. And oh, Mary, the man whom I have just met I know to be the same I met on that day! I suppose that just as I met him his companion knocked the nurse senseless and took my child. But why, oh, why, did they take my little Majorie? Oh, could the men but capture him and discover what was done with my little darling! Now I feel that evil hovers over us, in some form."

"Oh, do not apprehend evil, dear Lady de Bruce; but try and compose yourself to a little rest," said Lady Hawren.

Soon the men returned, unsuccessful, having seen no man at all suiting the description given by Lady de Bruce.

Lady Hawren, having stepped outside the grotto to hear the report of the men, looking seaward, saw with dismay Edwin shoving off in a little boat, alone with Flora, toward the little Fairy Isle. All day he had refrained from going near her, for he was distraught with contending emotions. He had been so very wretched since his aunt had revealed to him Flora's low birth, which had been a deadly stroke; his pride came to his rescue, and he resolved he would never meet her again, even in friendly converse; he felt he could never associate with her, holding the relation of "a delicate friendship," as suggested by his aunt.

But on accidentally rushing into her presence on the night previous, at the last hour of the fête, and having spent an hour of almost perfect bliss wandering with her in the moonlight, he had felt that his pride must yield. But this morning, after a sleepless night, pride came again to his rescue; he determined to risk no more private talk with her, and only to meet her hereafter in the crowd. All day he had struggled with his pride, seeing her sylphlike form floating in and out; hearing her charming voice in

joyous song—for she was happily unconscious of his trouble. He had, on the night before, declared his love a dozen times, though each time had checked himself and had not asked her love in return. But now the sun was dipping in the west, and many boats, laden with young people, were afloat on the lake. Flora had refused to go with the others; and sat on a little bank all alone. Here Edwin had found her on his return; for he had gone with the men on the search. He had caught a glimpse of her through a leafy screen, and could not withstand the temptation to go to her side; and asked her to go with him in a boat to the little Fairy Isle. In his happiness at once more being in her sweet presence he observed not Lady Hawren anxiously looking after them.

For the time all else was forgotten—his pride of lineage, her obscure birth; what was all else compared to the love of this pure and lovely maid? The effulgence of the fast sinking sun was wreathing the little fairy isle in flames of glory. The lily-fringed isle was a scene of beauty, and the odor from the flowers was oppressively sweet. He found her a seat overhung with climbing vines, for here the wildest luxuriance prevailed.

“This is a lovely place,” she said.

“It is heavenly! I think, sweet Flora, your presence would make the worst wilderness a heaven.”

“Captain, what bird is it that sings so sweetly over our heads?”

“A goldfinch; which sings so melodiously that it is called the Celestial bird.”

“How I do love its melody!” she said, looking up at the bird, while he gazed rapturously on her face.

“Flora, Flora! How I do love the melody of your sweet voice! And oh, Flora, how I do love you! How often have I told you this?”

“Repeatedly, Edwin. Yet——”

"Then, tell me, Flora, dear Flora—I have never asked you this—do you love me, Flora? Oh, speak, and dispel all anxiety from my heart; for, knowing that I love you so tenderly, you need not fear to tell me truly."

She listened, trembling with happiness, then answered:

"Oh, I *do*, Edwin; and have loved you since the hour we walked together over the flagstones in the old ruins!"

Seizing her hand, he pressed it to his lips—wildly, passionately—then drew back. Something had chilled his blood. But, repressing this feeling, he continued to pour forth words of burning love, and said:

"Then, my darling, you will—you will be——" He paused, struggled, but could go no further. He would have said, you will be my bride.

"Edwin, are you quite sure that you do love me as you say? You had not come near, nor spoken to me to-day, until just now; and it was the same yesterday. You hung aloof all day after early morning until the last hour of the fête."

"Love you, darling? One sweet look from your bright eyes is to my fond heart worth all the rest of womankind. You are the idol that I worship day and night. Doubt all else in this world, Flora, but never doubt I love you!"

"Oh, Edwin; within my heart there is a world of love, and like a love bird 'would I linger near you ever'!"

Returning to the grotto, Lady Hawren met Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal going out to speak to the men in regard to their search. Being thus left alone, she threw herself on the rustic seat and, sinking back amid the cushions, clasped her hands and cried:

"Oh, the infatuated boy! What am I to do to save him? He must not—he cannot marry her—poor, dear,

sweet Flora! I do not wonder that he loves her, she is a lovely creature; but never, never, never, shall he marry the daughter of a menial, the daughter of a pirate, the daughter of a *murderess*! I shall be forced to break my promise, and tell him all that Mrs. Macleod is—a murderess—before I will submit to it. Yes, I will tell it rather than——”

Hearing a step on the gravel outside, she sprang to a sitting posture, and the tall form of Lord Phantomfell appeared before her.

“Ah, my Lady, have I twuly found you here, and alone? This is a gweat pleasuah, I assuah you; a gweat pleasuah!”

“Be seated, my Lord,” she said, as pleasantly as possible under the trying circumstances, her face suffused.

“Aw, Lady Hawren, I supposed you had gone out in the boat; at least I feared you had.”

“Oh no, my Lord. I believe you were of the party that went out in search of the armed man who was seen——”

“Yes, yes, my Lady; but we saw no man, and think Lady de Bwuce was mistaken—mised—my Lady. Indeed, she must have been labohing under a stwange, a vewy stwange, hallucination to even foh one moment think there was an armed man pwowling about these pwemises. There are too many of us men—old army officews, weahing swodes and pistols—foh any one man to ventuh among us; too many bwave men, my Lady.”

There was an awkward pause, then he began:

“Youah Ladyship——”

“Sir?”

“Youah Ladyship is looking wemawkably——” “Oh, if fate would champion my cause and give me utterance!” he thought, twirling his lovelock. Then aloud he said: “I must say, Lady Hawren, youar face is

all flushed and glowious to behold; a heaven of beauty is beaming fwom youah lovely eyes."

"My Lord, I daresay my face is a little flushed. I have been excited. Pray, have you any hope of finding the man?"

"Who, my Lady? Aw, the immaginawy pusson with swode and pistols? Ah, dear Lady; be not excited on account of that immaginawy being; be not afwaid. No man shall appwoach to do you harm while a bold knight sits thus by youah side to defend you."

"Oh, my Lord, I have no fear of the man——"

"No, Lady; no! I beseech you, have no feah. But what can have called to youah cheek this woseate hue? Am I mistaken when—— May I dare to hope that this flush on youah lovely cheek, and this bwightness of youah beautiful eye were elicited at the appwoach of my unwo'thy self? May I not hope that I have gained a gentle sway ovah a willing subject? Dear Lady, you are enthwoned as mistwess within this heart—as its gentle mistwess. And could you, deah Lady, find it congenial with youah feelings to accept this hand of mine which I now offeah you, with my heawt and all I possess, and give me youah love, this would be to me the sum of earthly bliss. But, if all hope is lost of my weseption into youah gwace, then am I of all men most misewable, indeed!"

"Oh, my Lord Phantomfell; you do me too much honor! Do not ask it of me, dear sir. I—I have no heart to give you. You would not wed a lady who does not love you!"

"Deah Lady, do not say so gwievous a thing, light of my life. I love you! Do not blight my being by wefusing to become my bwide!"

"Oh, do not ask it of me, my Lord. I cannot accept your offer, which I realize to be the highest tribute a man can offer a woman—the greatest boon a noble

man can give the woman of his choice. I trust, my Lord, you will not charge me with having led you to expect—to hope that which you can never realize.”

“No, deah Lady; you have not. On the contwawy, you have shunned, noticeably shunned, always, my appwoach. And but foah the gweat pleasueh of finding you heah alone in this chawming little wetweat, and looking so ovahpowehingly beautiful, I should have nevah had the temerity to addwess you on this subject.”

“My Lord, among the noble ladies present surely it will not be difficult to find one who will respond to your heart’s love. You will forgive me, my Lord, and entertain for me no unkind feelings, I trust. Let us continue to be good friends, and at any time if I can aid you in any way, please to notify me, and I will gladly do for you all in my power. And now, my Lord, I hear the girls coming; let us part as friends,” and she held out her hand. He gallantly dropped on one knee and, seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips and, rising, retired just in time to avoid meeting with the nymphs, who were now returning from their boat ride.

It was growing dusk, and all returned to the old castle, where, later they would assemble in the drawing-room and spend the evening in conversation and music. At supper time Edwin again eluded his aunt’s vigilance, and accompanied Flora to the dining hall.



CHAPTER XL.

A MERRY EVENING.

"Avaunt! to-night my heart is light, no dirge will I up-
raise,
But waft the angel on her flight, with a pean of old days!"

"I have been happy, though (but) in a dream."

THIS was the second evening spent inside since coming to the castle. The drawing-room was a blaze of light, and the fleeting moments were chased away with light music, many jests and much ringing laughter.

"Let us have a song," said Louis. "Lady Kathryn will sing for us!" And he approached with her syrinda, or Indian guitar.

Kathryn, who sat with Doctor Godkins in a moonlit window, returned, with assumed gaiety:

"No; the Doctor will sing for you, doubtless."

"No; I never sing," affirmed the Doctor.

"Yet there's melody in your heart and on your lips," she said, coquettishly, with her sweetest smile.

"Your Ladyship will sing for us; just one stanza," he pleaded, taking the syrinda from the hands of Louis and placing it in her own.

A moment she hesitates, then her snowy hand is upon the strings; she handles the guitar with much grace and beauty; and there is a deep pathos in her voice as she sings:

"Still, like dew in silence falling,
Drops for thee the nightly tear,
Still that voice the past recalling,
Dwells like echo, on my ear,
Still, still!

Day and night the spell hangs o'er me,
Here forever fixed thou art;
As thy form first shone before me,
So 'tis graven on this heart,
Deep, deep!"

Her voice quivered over the last words, and, tossing the light instrument away, she cried:

"Enough, enough! Louis, take it to Flora, who can sing."

"——but she is odd," Rosa, on the opposite side of the room, was saying to the Major.

"Oh, but she absorbs me wholly; even her oddities cause me to love her more. Ah, my jewel!"—to Nora, who at this time was passing with Julien.

"Oh, you grim old goblin!" she returned, passing on.

"Well, noo; of all the graceful beings! Ha! ha! ha!" merrily laughed the Major.

Now Rosa was performing gracefully on her flute for Louis, playing: "The Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee," and was asked to sing it, but refused, saying:

"Ask Flora to sing it; she sings better than I."

"I cannot sing it alone," returned Flora; "I have never sung it without Gaston's assistance; he always sang it with me."

"——Yes, my Lord; I have studied law, but find I have very little liking for it, and feel that I am too wholly a soldier to be loyal to so exacting a business," returned Edwin, to Lord de Bruce, with whom he was conversing, not far away.

"Flora, Edwin sings it well; he will help you," called Kathryn, across the room. "Edwin, come and sing with Flora your old familiar song you sang so much at home!"

Edwin rose cheerfully, and went to Flora's side.

All remained hushed and still while the harmony of their mellow voices permeated the room.

"How wondrously their voices do harmonize!" exclaimed Annie to Guy, who hung over her with looks of cordial love. "And what perfect harmony exists between their lips and the deep magic in the chords of the lute."

"——the dark-eyed maid," Rorey was saying, in the conclusion of a sentence to Louis, a little to one side.

"'No painter, with all his palette's dyes, can approach the splendor of her eyes!' in which one might gaze for years and yet would never tire."

"Is that a quotation, Master Kearney?" asked Rorey.

"I cannot say exactly; it comes from the depths of my heart, I know. List! The Captain sings with Flora. 'Did ever raven sing so like a lark!'"

"Her voice has a liquid sweetness."

"Aye, she can touch every mood, from gayest merriment to deepest sadness."

As the song closed, Kathryn was saying:

"Yes, he is glowing! And he said, 'This is a picture of unrivaled beauty. Behold here the groves 'as Elysian as the groves of Bubastis!' 'Methinks such heavenly place as this was made for love and lovers' tryst!' 'Oh, my Lord,' I said, 'Methinks you are poetic. Are you not a poet? Confess, now, that you are.'"

"Yes, George, Lord Hawdon is——" The Doctor's rejoinder was lost in a burst of merry laughter from a group which had gathered around Nora and Major O'Connor, who sat on a sofa together, while Rosa, Rorey and Julien did the laughing.

"I admit, Major, I once had a lover—a devoted lover, I might say, for he was very fond of me," Nora was saying, "and loved me above all things. He had a pet kitten, and brought it over and pre-

sented it to me. Oh, he had the loveliest little eyes and the sweetest soft gray hair——”

“Sure,” broke in the Major, “he was a fine-looking old chap, noo, like myself, with gray hair and those little squint eyes—oh, wasn’t he a pretty boy of a lover, eh, Miss Nora?”

“Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho!” laughed Rosa, Julien and Rorey.

“Oh, the kitty, I mean, Major; you misunderstand. He was devoted to me and loved me above all——”

“Sure, then, Jewel, it must be consoling to have the unbounded love of an old gray cat——”

“’Twas not the cat at all; it was the nice young man who fairly worshipped me, and he was a perfect love of a boy, too.”

“Oh, did he worship you, then? Sure, I don’t blame him one bit. I’d ha’ done the same had I been in his place.”

“And I remember one day,” continued Nora, “it was rainy, and the dog got after him—he was the greatest villain that ever lived——”

“There, noo, Jewel; you said but now he was a perfect love; again he is such a villain the dog chased him all over the place——”

“Oh, ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho!” chorused the group.

“No, no! The dog, I mean; he chased my kittie. And, don’t you know, it made the young man angry, and he got a whip and chased him off—the dog. Now do you understand?”

“Oh, yes, yes! You can elucidate; that’s clear enough.”

“Then the dear little fellow sat upon the seat beside me and gently laid his head on my arm, and purred so lovingly——”

“Sure, and I’d be blessed if that was not a most happy termination to the affair——”

“——and I stroked his little soft head, you——”

“Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Ho, ho, ho! Oh, hoo, hoo, hoo!” Louis had joined the group.

“Soft head! The young man, eh, Nora?”

“A soft head, and how you stroked it! ho, ho!” ho!” said Rorey.

Nora hid her crimson face in her hands. Then, raising her head, exclaimed:

“Rorey!” And, turning on the Major, said: “Major O’Connor, you are the most incorrigible old Irishman I ever saw; and I do not intend to tell you one word more about my lover!”

“Oh, Jewel, pardon me, and do finish the narration of your first love story.”

“Then, I trust, you will not persist in misunderstanding me again, Major. The little thing appeared hungry—the cat—so I sent the young man, you know, to fetch him—the cat—a little milk in a cup. He laid the whip on the seat beside me, and a good thing it was, too; for here he came back and began to snarl and growl at my cat, showing his ugly teeth in a most ferocious manner. Then, sure, I snatched up the whip and laid it on his back most heavily. He ran, and I ran after him, and striped him good. He never stopped at all till he reached the dog kennel, and ran in. Then I closed the door on him. Now I had the advantage of him; don’t you think so?” she asked, looking into his eyes that were brimming with mischief.

“I do think so, Miss Nora; and how I do pity the poor boy! Sure, the vicissitudes in his life were many and great—from being a loved and loving young man, the hand of his mistress is turned against him; the same hand, too, that so recently had stroked his little soft head; the lash is laid on his back in no gentle manner, and he is forced to take refuge in the dog kennel.”

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Rosa. "He, he, he!" chuckled Julien. "Ho, ho, ho! Hoo, hoo, hoo!" roared Rorey and Louis.

"And that is the very reason, ma cushla," continued the Major, "that I keep clear o' the lessies. They smile one minute, and the next they may be laying on with a whip; and that's the kind o' craytures they are, sure. Rorey, my boy, don't you believe it?"

"No, sir; I think them the very kindest of creatures, Major."

"Sure; now, Major, I'm not going to tell you another blink of my story, for here you are making fun of me and my lover, and he's the only one I ever had, too."

"And he *was* a foin fellow, with little eyes. Sure, you'll be having others enough to make up for him of the little eyes, one of whom I most willingly subscribe myself." And he made her a profound bow.

"You get out! You invariably get things mixed, and persist in mistaking the cat for the boy, the boy for the dog, and the dog for—for—both. You can just leave me and go across the room and sit with Aunt Mary; then I guess you will have to be on your P's and Q's."

"Sure, Miss Nora O'Neal, I'll be after doing that very thing; for she's the best-looking woman in the house, anyway; and you don't know your cat from your dog, nor your boy from your cat, at all, at all."

"I'm not Nora O'Neal yet, I thank you," she said, flashing a look on Rorey that sent the blood to his cheeks. "But he was the sweetest dear, and I did love him so——"

"Oh, how I do wish I had been he!" sighed the Major.

"What, Major, you wish to be a cat?"

"Not for worlds! But the young man whom you loved so fondly."

"Why, no; it was the cat I loved. He was so gentle—true, the young man was very fond of me—I tied a soft ribbon around his neck—he looked so pretty—and led him along."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Ho, ho, ho! He, he, he! Hoo, hoo, hoo! Hu, hu, hu!" Major O'Connor joined in the laugh. Louis offered Rosa his arm for a promenade in the great-hall.

All this time the Earl had been walking slowly up and down the great-hall, whence he could see and hear all that was going on—the heavy drapery between the drawing-room and hall having been rolled aside, throwing both into one—and had heard every word of Kathryn's little snatch of song, her remarks to the Doctor about his nephew, Lord Hawdon. Passing near to where Mrs. O'Neal sat, she said to him, interrupting his meditations:

"My Lord, I fear the children are growing indecorously boisterous." He paused and contemplated the merry group. "Charlie is entertaining them with some of his stories," she continued. "I must go over and curb them down a little."

"No, no, dear aunt," he said; "let them alone. Oh, let them enjoy themselves while they may! We are here for a little unalloyed pleasure; let them throw off all social restraint and be merry, for the dark and gloomy pall of sadness will fall over them soon enough." He sighed deeply.

At his request she rose, and, laying her hand on his arm, they walked up and down together.

"We both know from experience, dear aunt, that life cannot be always rosy. Allow the dear ones to be merry while they may."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! He, he, he! Hoo, hoo, hoo! Hu, hu, hu!"

"Only listen to that, my Lord! What a wild out-

burst for a drawing-room! The Major is in his element now; he's teasing Nora."

"She is equal to the emergency, aunt, I assure you, with her quick wit and *sang-froid*. No, they cannot always be happy. Leave them, as long as they are not disturbing the others." And his quick eye sought out the relation of the other parties, respectively, and he noted that Kathryn was flirting desperately with the Doctor.

"My Lord, from some cause you are sad. You should not look on the dark side of the picture. There is a bright future for you. If only you will keep up courage, you are sure to win."

"How is it with you, dear aunt?"

"My life is all tranquillity, my Lord."

"I am glad to be assured of this, darling aunt." He sighed again, and glanced in the direction of Kathryn and the Doctor.

At the farther end of the great-hall they hear the tinkling of a lute. In a moonlit window, where Flora and Edwin are sitting, she fingers the lute softly, while he is saying:

"Oh, what rapture to be near that loved one, in the lovely moonlight, while sweet music falls so gently on the ear!"

Lady Hawren saw the happy couple in the window, and, what with Edwin's rashness and Lord Phantom-fell's proposal in the evening, she was much disturbed and excited.

"——and he has a nice cousin, Doctor—Mr. de Vere."

"Oh, Virgil, my Lady? Yes; he is one of the finest of men."

Kathryn was still speaking of Lord Hawdon, at the same time asking about de Vere and carrying on a flirtation with the Doctor. She was divinely beautiful, so thought the Earl, as he gazed on her animated

face for a moment. She and the Doctor, simultaneously raising their eyes, met his sadly earnest gaze. Abruptly he turned, and, placing his aunt in her seat, continued his measured tread.

"Had you ever a sure-enough sweetheart, Major O'Connor?"

"No; not sure-enough, Miss Nora. But I once visited a pretty girl just to tease another boy; that was when I was young."

"Are you not young enough now?"

"Young enough to visit a pretty girl? Oh, we shall see about that! But shall I tell you about devil-ing this other boy?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" they all cry. Louis and Rosa had promenaded back, and stood waiting to hear the Major's story.

"His name was Mickey Finn. The girl was Judy M'Corkle. Mickey and I were rivals; that made it interesting. Well, I set out one day to visit this divinity, who lived about three miles from the village where I was stationed. I did like to annoy poor Mickey! I rode slowly along, thinking how pretty Judy was, sure enough, and how it teased Mickey for me to visit her. The road ran parallel with the cottage where Judy lived, and I was now in sight of the cottage; and, looking away up the road beyond, I saw Mickey, also riding slowly along on his old blaze-faced horse; also thinking of Judy, no doubt. I drew up my bridle, saying to my Bonny War Eagle: 'Ho! Now here's a go! I will never be outdistanced by that chappie, though not so much interested as he, perhaps.' My rival must have recognized me at the same moment, my own horse—a gray—being no less conspicuous than Old Blaze. My old gray pricked up his ears and started off at a fine pace. Old Blaze set up a jog trot. I spurred Bonny War Eagle up a little. Mickey, too, accelerated his speed. Now we were get-

ting quite near the cottage, and I would not have Mickey beat me; not for the world. I put spurs to Bonny War Eagle, and he set out as if in a desperate charge accompanied by martial music. On I went; on came my rival. I perceived I had the advantage by having a good, smooth road; while a long puddle of water and mud, from a recent rain, intercepted his course. On, on I went; on, on he came. Through the mud he splashed, getting his best doublet all bespattered, using his best effort. I began to fear that, in spite of all War Eagle could do, my rival would win; but, putting him on the double-quick, I dashed up to the gate about three hundred feet ahead of Mickey. I stopped so suddenly, and threw War Eagle back on his haunches with so much vim, his hoofs scooting in the ground literally besprinkled the cottage with gravel. Hastily dismounting, I rushed, panting, up the walk; and, by the way, saw the little coquette at the window, laughing. Breathlessly pounding on the door, I was soon admitted and hastened in, lest Mickey should enter before I could propound my weighty question. I had every reason to believe she preferred me to Mickey. She said:

“‘Oh, Mr. O’Connor; you appear to be in haste this morning.’

“‘Well, now, Mistress Judy, indeed I am. I have a weighty matter for you to decide, and you alone can decide it.’

“‘Oh, Mr. O’Connor, do not ask me to make a decision for you; I cannot.’

“‘But, my dear Judy, you can do it dacently, and you must, to relieve my heart and mind of a great burden.’ I glanced outside, and there was Mickey walking up and down in the road.

“‘There’s a wager between myself and Mickey, and you must decide it. He is now walking impatiently

outside the gate; and, dear Judy, I would have your answer before he comes in.'

" 'Oh, Mr. O'Connor,' she said, blushing beautifully; 'you cannot wish me to decide this—this——'

" 'Oh, you must; you will, Judy! Answer it for me. Yet—oh—u—u—uh!' I sighed fearfully.

" 'What?'

" 'It may be just as well not. 'Tis a question I have pondered for months. I cannot sleep o' nights—oh—u—u—u'——Another heart-rending sigh, 'but I will not——'

" 'Oh, why?'

" 'You might decide against me. Oh—u—u—h——'

" 'No, no! Indeed I—perhaps not.'

" 'Then, promise me that you will not, Judy. Yes, dear, promise that you will decide in my favor!'

" 'How can I before I know?'

" 'Yes, yes, Judy; quickly! I see Mickey coming in at the gate!'

" 'Tell me! Oh, please tell me!'

" 'No, no; you will not promise.'

" 'Oh, please!'

" 'No, I'll be going! Yet——'

" 'Oh, do not!'

" 'Yes, yes; 'tis no use——'

" 'Oh, yes; yes, stay! I do promise.'

" 'Do you so, Judy?' said I, dropping on one knee and seizing her hands in mine. 'Then, Judy, you will answer me true, and tell me which—which——'

" 'Oh, what?' she asked breathlessly; 'how can you ask? Surely you already know that I——'

" 'But Judy, you must tell me which—which——'

" 'What! Oh, what?' asked Judy.

" 'You will decide in my favor, dear Judy?' How her hands trembled in mine!

" 'Yes, yes! You must know that——'

" 'You will answer in the affirmative, Judy?'

"‘Oh, yes, yes! How can you ask?’

"‘Then, Judy, decide this question for us: Which is heavier, a pound of salt or a pound of feathers?’ And, quickly rising to my feet, I said:

"‘Oh, here is Mickey! You may tell him, for I must be going; but, Judy, be sure you answer in my favor!’ At the door I met Mickey, and, turning, I saw her face was white as a sheet. Making her a low bow, I passed out as Mickey passed in."

"Ho, ho, ho! He, he, he!" laughed Rorey and Julien.

"Oh, Major! Oh—o—o—oh! Maybe she loved you. How could you be so cruel?" cried Nora, disconcerted; she had formed such a high opinion of his nobility of character, his gentle manhood. Rosa looked demure.

"Miss Rosa, had you been in her place what would you have done?" asked Louis.

"Had I been in her place, I would have said salt, of course!"

"Bravo, Miss Rosa! Ho, ho, ho!" said Rorey. When the laugh subsided, Major O'Connor said:

"You think me cruel, Nora. I must exculpate myself from apparent heartlessness. I would not have you think me heartless. There was an event antecedent to this, of which I must tell you; then you will not think me the only heartless one. I was young then, and maybe should not have done it, but was angry, and wanted revenge. I have told you she was a coquette; she gloried in being one. I had a friend whom I loved very much—Dick Murphy. He was madly in love with the little coquette, and everyone told him that she was only leading him on until he would propose; then would cruelly throw him over. But, no! Dick had the utmost confidence in her, and went on and on. Finally he offered her his heart and

hand, then she said: 'No, Mr. Murphy; I have no notion of marrying you!'

"'What!' cried poor Dick, thunderstruck.

"'Why, no, Mr. Murphy; you would not expect me to marry just any one who comes along.'

"Poor Dick was staggered. He had given her all the love of his noble, young heart. Perceiving what his friends had told him was all true, he turned white, and, like a man drunk, reeling and staggering, he wended his way back to camp—came in and dropped down like a dead man. For two weeks, day and night, he raved in delirium. I sat by his side and nursed him through it all, and when I heard his wild ravings I vowed a vow that I would have revenge and, if possible, cause her to suffer in the same ratio. I assure you, Miss Nora, I would not now be guilty of such wickedness; but, as I have said, I was young then."



CHAPTER XLI.

ON THE WITCHES' STAIRWAY.

"'Tis time this heart should be unmoved
Since others it has ceased to move;
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love."

NEXT morning, when breakfast was announced and all were ready to proceed to the dining-room, Kathryn glided, like a beam of light, into the drawing-room, her face aglow with excitement, and with a slight inclination of her head acknowledged the morning greetings. The Earl bowed low, without recognition from her, approached, and, taking her hand, drew it within his arm and led the way. He had not ad-

dressed a word to her since the morning before, in the grotto; nor did he now speak, but only led her to the table. Rorey and Julien stood together at the head, ready to place them, conversing with Hortense, who stood near the Earl's chair.

"My Lord," said Hortense, "with Lady Hawren's compliments, she bade me say she will not be out to breakfast."

Placing Kathryn in her seat, he turned to Mrs. O'Neal, who was just entering with Lord de Bruce, saying:

"Dear aunt, will you kindly preside at the tea-tray?"

The Chaplain craved a blessing; Mrs. O'Neal did the honors of the table with charming grace. Kathryn posed in rigid dignity by the Earl's side. Now he turned to her and said:

"I trust Lady Hawren is not ill, my Lady."

"She bade me say to your Lordship she is a little indisposed, and will not leave her room this morning," she returned, with a rigid bow, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Thank you. I am sorry—I thought last evening she seemed a little flurried or excited. I regret to learn that she is indisposed," he said, and he looked intently into her eyes until they were averted.

"We have a long day before us, my Lord. What sports shall we pursue?" asked Doctor Godkins.

"Captain Arranton and I will ask to be excused from the sports to-day—part of the day, at least—being called to Carlisle on a little business. But I trust, my friends, that you will not let the sweet hours pass unwinged by pleasure," returned the Earl.

"A chase! A chase!" exclaimed Guy.

"Yes, let us mount and away to the forest," said the Major.

"Then back and have a boat ride with the ladies at

sunset," cried Louis, remembering with pleasure the boat ride he had enjoyed with Rosa.

"You like hunting, Doctor?" asked the Major.

"Most dearly, sir; hunting is exhilarating and conducive to health, from the exposure to fresh air. Yes, hunting involves exercise in many forms; and in remote ages was held as a pastime of much importance."

"Aye, true, Doctor; true!" said the Major. "But before it was a pleasure it was a necessity, and people were urged to it, not alone by hunger, but by the necessity of self-protection from wild beasts."

"Hunting has been, and still is, beneficial to man, though it induces cruelty to animals," observed the Earl.

"The ancient Britons were famous hunters," said the Doctor, "and their deerhounds were the very finest; they exported deerhounds to the Continent, especially to Gaul."

"The Saxons were far more addicted to hunting than were the Romans. Fondness for the chase with them seems to have been innate," said the Earl. "I believe I have inherited my share of it."

"I have read with much pleasure Aristotle on field sports, and a treatise on dogs and hunting by Xenophon, called the 'Cynegeticus,' " observed the Doctor.

"We have also interesting treatises from the Roman writers: Horace, Cicero, Virgil and others," said Lord de Bruce.

"Yes," the Doctor said to Lady de Bruce, beside him; "it is a great thing to go on the chase with a fine pack of Arundel hounds, my Lady."

"There has been great improvement in fox-hunting, even in the last fifty years, I believe," she returned.

"Yes, my Lady; the fox was then considered an animal of the higher chase; but at present all that is cared for in the fox is his brush."

"Aye, Doctor; in those days which we read of they

took it on foot, with their trencher dogs, consisting of everything in dog shape," rejoined the Major; "and if we may believe what old writers have said on the subject, there were, in those days, some spirited foot fox-chasing. For instance, the scene depicted by that worthy minstrel-monk called 'First in order of Anglican poets':

"'Aha! the fox, and after him they ran,
And she with staves, and many an other man,
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot and Gerlond,
And malkin with her distaff in her hond,
Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges,
So fered were for barking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men, and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought her hertes brake.'"

"Bravo, Major!" cried Louis. "What a fox-hunt was that! Let us this day, under the guidance of Apollo and Diana, set forth, with Pollox, Orion and Hypolitus in our train, in pursuit of the deer, the fox and the hare."

"And have you hunted much, Major?" asked the Doctor.

"In times of peace, Doctor, a huntsman am I; out with hawk and hound. But when 'war supplies a nobler game,' a soldier am I. Truly glad am I, Doctor, to find there exists between us a congenial passion for field sports." And with mutual felicitations, in anticipation of a fine day for sport, they rose from the table.

On emerging from the doorway of the dining-room, the Earl with Kathryn preceding the others, turned abruptly to the left and entered the corridor leading to the old hall in the ruins, where Edwin and Flora had first met. Though the morning was glorious, no rays from the sun could reach this shady portion of the building at this early hour. Dewdrops trembled on the trailing vines laden with scarlet trumpet-flow-

ers. A soft, mist-like fog hung over the sea. The little brig which they had been accustomed to see lying at a distance on the smooth sea was not visible. Up and down the flagged floor they paced with even tread, without a word having been spoken by either. Kathryn was nervous. Her agitation was such that she found it difficult to stand, and almost felt that she must sink upon the floor. Oh, what was he going to say? She felt that this would be a crisis. There was determination in his face; a look of resolution which she had never before observed there. She knew she loved him better than her own life, and knew that he loved her as well. Their souls were knit together in perfect unison. But there was that fatal promise; then, she felt such pain in her heart since the fête from jealousy. She had been angry and had recalled to her mind everything she had heard against him, and tried to force herself to believe it all. She could not. She knew in her heart he could not be guilty of such baseness. But there was her promise, made in perfect faith, in her sweet innocence and ignorance. Must she break a promise to one now dead? Never! Never! Even though she believed him innocent, he had never been exonerated. She could never be happy under the circumstances; instead, would be perfectly miserable. The thought would pursue her forever, robbing her of every joy. Now turning an angle, they were completely screened from view, if anyone should follow down the long corridor. Walking on, they soon reached the witches' stairway, as they had called it. Kathryn was thinking: "Break my promise? Never! Never!" And in bitter anguish felt like shrieking aloud. She felt that she could go no farther, and, trembling with excitement, she cried:

"My Lord, you are killing me!"

"Oh, my Lady, you are killing *me*! This day, aye, this hour, a decision must be made! My heart is

breaking! You have held me as a bauble quite long enough. From year to year have I been forced to this bitter fare. I must know my fate here and now! I begin to believe that you are trifling with my feelings; that as a coquette you are enjoying your dominion over my heart's best love, which has been lavished on you since the first moment our eyes ever met. If your own heart is not enlisted, permit me to know it, and I can then go and make other arrangements for my future."

"Oh, my Lord; you cannot accuse me—— You—you do not think——" Her face was white as marble; she trembled as she spoke. "You know that I do——" She struggled, but could speak no further.

"Do what? Love me, darling one?" What rapture! What sudden joy is flowing in his soul, his every nerve and vein glowing with ardor. His heart by one sole impulse is possessed, he clasps and holds her to his breast. He feared she would swoon, but she drew away haughtily.

"No, no! It can never be! I can never be yours!" she wailed, and sank, almost overcome, on the steps of the witches' stairway, among the trailing vines, almost hidden from his sight. He stood before her, his mouth firmly set, and gazed upon her. Then, clasping his hands behind him, he paced to and fro; pausing again, he said:

"Kathryn, I have unintentionally elicited a tender feeling from a most noble heart, which I will not ignore, unless you will give me reason to hope that at *some time* my heart's dearest wish may be realized. It will be better that one heart should be made happy than that two, perhaps three, should be miserable. If your love for me is as sincere as mine is for you, there is no reason—there *can* be none—why we should not be happy. But if your happiness does *not* depend on me, I alone would be made to suffer. Thus, if you

cannot make me happy, I have it in my power to make another happy, and myself not the less so. My mind is made up, and this day I will act on your decision. I go to-day to Carlisle for a short time. In returning, will call at Hawdon Manor and see Lady Hermione a little; and my fate will be decided."

He made several rapid strides back and forth, then stopped in front of her, his hands behind his back, and gazed on her pallid face.

Statuesque, she sat amid the vines, nor moved nor spoke, her gaze fixed upon the vaulted sky beyond the crumbling walls.

"You once told me that you loved me; you have never disavowed it." He stood anxiously awaiting a response. "If you would retract, I would feel—feel more free—to—to act."

Sad-eyed, she sat amid the glory of the scarlet blooms, with their sumptuous tints and soft verdure, apparently a being petrified to marble.

If she spoke, she knew her voice would quiver; that she would give way to a flood of tears; perhaps swoon. Her heart was breaking. She said to herself: "I never will retract!" and tried earnestly to articulate the words, but her voice failed to respond to her will, her emotion very near overcoming her; but with a supreme effort, inwardly struggling, she repressed her tears and sat like a stone, knowing if she uttered one word or yielded in the least to her feelings she would break down utterly. He, thinking it stolid indifference, walked the floor; and, wringing his hands, cried:

"Farewell, farewell, sweet dream of love! I must meet life bravely!" Then, turning to her, he bowed low and, with punctilious courtesy, said: "Shall I lead your Ladyship to the drawing-room?"

She rose and, with an effort, made a grand curtsy and accepted the defferential offer, her heart so filled with anguish that she neither saw nor heard anything.

She laid her hand upon his arm; he led her forth from this sweet retreat which he had entered with great determination and at least a degree of hope. Now he was bereft of all. Though upheld by her pride, his arm affording her support, she found it difficult to walk up the long corridor. At length, reaching the drawing-room, he seated her on a sofa, and with a courtly bow withdrew.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE STORM.

"The sky is changed!—and such a change! O night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong;
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder!"

THE Earl and Edwin started immediately for Carlisle. The other men mounted for a bird hunt and set out. The ladies, being quite tired out with so much exercise, and feeling the need of rest, decided to remain indoors all day. Some of the younger girls planned for a moonlight picnic on the little Fairy Isle. After some hours in the chase the hunters returned, and when they had been served a fine luncheon betook themselves also to rest; for they, as well as the ladies, needed repose.

And now the evening hour is drawing nigh. Behold the glowing sun—mighty god of day—'mid gaudy clouds of golden eve, is sinking toward the sea, and will soon bid farewell to lovely grove and glen. Yet a halo of glory still lingers in the treetops, which stretch their long shadows across the witching scene,

and rests with a ruddy glow upon the old castle walls.

Below, on the water, are countless boats of many different patterns.

The party of nymphs, on emerging from the great hall, observe the approach of the Earl and Edwin, with their attendants, and stop awhile to await their coming, for Rorey and Julien had accompanied the Earl; and the girls—Kathryn, Flora, Rosa, Nora, Edith, Laura and Hilda—and the maids, with baskets, pitchers, cups and platters, were bound for the little isle; and, wishing to have Rorey and Julien accompany them, stopped beneath the friendly old elms to await their approach. On dismounting, Edwin went immediately to Kathryn, who stood with an arm around Flora.

“Oh,” said Rosa, “we are going to the little Fairy Isle, to have a moonlight picnic, and want Rorey and Julien to go with us.”

“Yes,” said Flora, “we want them to row us over and take care of us.”

“Oho,” said Edwin, turning to the Earl; “a select party, my Lord, and we are not invited!”

The Earl, dismounting, threw his reins to Andy, who had come for the horses.

“Oh, my Lord,” said Nora, “we are going to have a charming picnic—just a girl picnic—and will not have a single young man with us but Rorey and Julien to care for us.”

“Oh,” began Rosa, “this is a select party. But, girls, I think we might let the Captain go with us.”

“Ah,” said Edwin, “would you be willing that I should go—but there’s coming a storm!”

The Earl lingered near Andy, giving some directions; feeling undecided as to how Kathryn would receive him, he hesitated to approach. He then motioned to Flora, who came to him.

"I am sorry, Flora; but I cannot let you go to the isle this evening; there is coming a storm," he said.

"A storm, my Lord?"

"Yes, Flora; I notice infallible signs of a storm. Tell Lady Kathryn she must not think of going. And turning to Rorey and Julien, who still sat their horses, he said:

"Boys, ride down the beach and tell Macdonald to put carefully away every boat, for there will be a terrific storm this evening. He no doubt has already noticed the clouds yonder, hovering over the sun."

Then his Lordship approached the group. Flora had delivered his message to Kathryn, who attributed this as a ruse on his part to oppose her; and when she heard him tell Rorey to order the boats put away, she resented it; her bosom heaved, and her eyes flashed indignation. Lifting his hat, he said:

"Ladies, I am sorry to disappoint you, but we have hurried home on account of observing serious indications of a storm; and it is impossible—you cannot go this time!"

"Oh, no danger of a storm, my Lord!" they cry.

"Oh, we must go! 'Twill be so delightful! Such a lovely moonlight night as we will have!" insisted Rosa and Nora.

But he explained, and told them what he thought of the prospect.

Kathryn threw her arm around Flora, and walked with much dignity back to the hall. The maids with their baskets returned indoors.

The Earl and Edwin stood a while with Rosa and Nora; then they also went in.

Kathryn, with Flora, proceeded directly to her room. Marie followed her mistress, and was ready to attend her.

"Marie," said Kathryn, "you may go now and leave

us alone. Tell mother I have headache and shall not be down to dinner. Let no one disturb us, Marie."

"Eh, bien, miladi! But zhall I nod bring you something, a little bouillon?"

"Nothing, Marie; I want nothing but quiet."

Marie went out, quietly closing the door after her. Kathryn threw herself on the bed, buried her face in her hands and sobbed convulsively. Sweet Flora sat by her side, saying nothing until Kathryn became more quiet."

"Lady Kathryn, I believe my Lord, the Earl, was right in forbidding us; hear the wind whistling around the old building. How it roars!"

"He's a wretch to assume such authority over me! He has no right, nor shall he ever have, to wield his authority over me! He's a—he——" She broke down, sobbing more vehemently than ever.

Then she rose, and with fiery indignation paced the room, her hands clenched behind her.

"Lady Kathryn," said Flora, "he is one of my best friends; the noblest and best of men, and would do no one wrong. It was because he loved you that he forbade your going to yonder isle. He would not have us risk our lives in the terrible storm now threatening even to demolish this old castle. Only list to the thunders' roar! Oh, Lady Kathryn, suppose we had gone; we should soon be swept off by the billows, to perish in the boiling sea! There! See that flash? How good and kind of my Lord to prevent our going!"

"Flora, I would that I were in the bottom of the sea, or tossing on the boiling billow; anywhere! Oh, I am too wretched to live!" Covering her face with her hands, she wept softly for a minute; then, throwing her arms around Flora, sobbed on her bosom.

"Dearest; oh, Dearest! You are the most precious jewel on earth! How can I ever love you enough?"

she said, kissing Flora over and over. "And I do know he is the noblest and sweetest man in this world; and I do love him better than my life, but I shall not let him know it. Never! I'll pay him for having the boats put away when he knew that we wished to use them."

"I am sure he knew best, my Lady. Will you not bathe your face now and dress for dinner?"

"No, Dearest; not for the world would I meet him again! I feel that I should swoon at sight of him. Go, Dearest, if you wish."

"No, Lady Kathryn; I will remain with you."

"Yet, Dearest, I will dress and go out to dinner, though I can eat nothing. Yes, I will don a heavy black dress, without a particle of color; it will accord with my heart, that is like a widowed one—is crushed within me. I will not ring for Marie; she will see that I have been weeping. If you will just assist me, Dearest, I will exchange this sylvan costume for this heavy black velvet and lace, so gaily decked with pink ribbons and sash. Yes, we will strip off every vestige of the pink—the rich bows, the sash—the scarf draped from the left shoulder. Unpin it, Flora; I will want the pearl brooch, too, for I will use only the brooch and a necklace of pearls."

"What an odd notion, Kathryn; how sombre you will look without the pink trimmings intended to be worn with this sumptuous velvet and black lace evening costume!" said Flora, as she deftly assisted.

"He has broken my heart!" And tears ran like rain down her cheeks, falling like dewdrops on the soft black velvet evening dress. "Flora, I know that my Lord seems very good and kind, and though I love him best of all on earth, yet will I control my heart. You know he is accused of a foul crime. I must not—I will not love him!"

"Lady Kathryn, it is the foulest slander! He is not

guilty; and my Lord Graeme is at the bottom of all this."

"Oh, Flora, could I believe as you do—could I *know* it—I should be the happiest mortal on earth——"

"You are doing yourself and the Earl a great injustice to entertain for a moment belief in this foul slander. My mother says she knows that Grandfather was imposed upon, and that my Lord Clifton never raised his hand against him. The thought would be perfectly abhorrent to his noble heart. Besides, my Uncle Donald told me my Lord is blameless. He knows positively that my Lord is not guilty of the charge, and told me never to believe it against him.

"Who is 'Uncle Donald,' Flora?"

"He is a sea captain, and comes home sometimes with my Lord Graeme; and once, when I was five years old, he brought me such a lovely present! See, here it is!" And Flora drew from her bosom a lovely locket, richly decked with rubies. How it sparkled and glowed in her hand! Kathryn exclaimed at its beauty, and said:

"Oh, take it off and let me examine it!"

"Oh, no, no! I have never taken it off; he made me promise to wear it always. But come closer and examine it."

Kathryn drew near; for it was fastened on a gold chain which was clasped around her neck, and, although it was a beautiful ornament, Flora had ever worn it in a little case inside her clothing.

On opening it, Kathryn beheld a bright, young face, not unlike Flora's own. Beneath the miniature were the letters "M. M.," handsomely engraved.

"Flora, that resembles you."

"Does it? Uncle Donald said it was a relative, but would not tell her name nor who she was," said Flora, replacing the locket in her bosom.

"But, Lady Kathryn, my Lord—he does not even know of this accusation."

"Could not you tell him, Flora?"

"Oh, not for this world would I mention it and wound his gentle heart! Yet it seems, my Lady, you would, ere this, have spoken to him of this false accusation, that he might exonerate himself."

"No, *no*, Flora! I swooned twice when urged to tell him why I could not wed him. And, oh, it almost broke my heart to be forced to drive him from me when I love him so! There, Dearest; place the pearl brooch—so! There! The black robe, unrelieved, makes me look marble-white."

"Oh, like a statue!" returned Flora. Kathryn sighed deeply.

"Oh, Flora, have you ever loved any one?"

"Sweet friend," said Flora, her face all aglow at this abrupt question, "I—you—I love my mother, yourself, and your lady mother."

"Oh, my Flora, think of you seeking a subterfuge! Aha, I guess! Can it be you love my Cousin Ned just a little bit? Ah, you need not confess! That telltale blush, it is enough." And Kathryn, seizing Flora in her arms, gave her a hearty hug and kiss.

Hortense now entered, saying:

"My Lady, Madame, your mother, desires your presence a small time."

"Flora, you dress, and remain here until I return. Dearest, I go, I suspect, for a reprimand." And Kathryn hastened to her mother just across the dressing room from where they were.

A little earlier Lady Hawren had sat in the library, looking out on the old elms in front, standing in such friendly relation near where the old gate had stood, leaning and reaching out so lovingly toward each other, reminding her of a pair of lovers. Now the wind began to lash and toss them wildly. The tapes-

try which screened the doorway was gently raised, the Earl entered and sat beside her, saying:

"Pardon me, dear aunt, for interrupting your meditations. I was looking for you, and nothing could suit me better just now than a private talk with you. I have been most unfortunate in offending, in some way, my cousin, Lady Kathryn. She has not been in a good humor with me since the fête, and has shown me no favor. On arriving but now, I met a bevy of girls hastening to the beach with their lunch baskets, intending to go to the little isle for a picnic. Seeing indications of a storm, I forbade their going, thinking it would be most hazardous, and ordered in all the boats. Kathryn appeared to be much offended; and, dear aunt, I am distressed beyond measure, and know not now what course to pursue." And he sighed deeply, bowing his head on his hands.

"My Lord, Kathryn is a spoiled child; she has never been governed. It was wrong for her to wish to go in opposition to your wishes. In fact, I was astounded when she declared her intention of going with the girls, for she has been very much indisposed all day, confined to her bed, tossing and moaning, banishing every one from her presence; throwing pillows at the maids, if they but dared to put their heads in the door; has eaten no morsel of food. Only a few moments before the girls started out she rose with a determination to accompany them."

"I have done wrong," he murmured. "I have wounded her too deeply."

"What did you observe, my Lord?"

"I may have been a little imperative, but noticed infallible signs of a storm, and felt it my duty to sternly oppose them, as they seemed so determined on going. Lady Kathryn appeared very angry, for which I am exceedingly sorry."

"She may have been annoyed, my Lord; she loves

you too well to feel anger. She certainly was not angry."

"She scarcely has admitted that she loves me, dear aunt; I have never been able to converse with her on the subject that lies nearest my heart. There is something unaccountable about it. She has twice swooned in my arms, when I have urged her to give me a promise, though I do feel that she loves me. Indeed, she has admitted it."

"There has been no confidence on the subject between us, my Lord; yet I know that she loves you, though she has never said as much to me. I know that she has loved you since the first time she ever saw you."

"True, she did once admit it to me; but when I urged her further she swooned in my arms for the second time. I thought I would not disturb the household, as on a former occasion, so placed her on a sofa and ran for restoratives, thinking on the return of consciousness she would relieve my mind; but on opening her eyes she bade me leave her and would listen to nothing else, murmuring something about a promise—keeping a promise. Dear aunt, what can have been her meaning? To what promise did she refer? I have suffered much, and there is no rest for me till I know. I have even thought to awaken jealousy in her heart, and told her this morning that I would go and offer my hand to another if only she would disavow her love for me. I may have been too cruel, aunt, but this did not move her; she sat like a stone, nor spoke, nor moved. Oh, dear aunt, can you tell me what this means? What is this promise to which she ever refers when I ask her to be mine, and which causes her so much excitement that she cannot speak?"

For a few moments Lady Hawren appeared puzzled. Then cried:

"Oh, my Lord, can it be possible she feels bound by a promise she made to your grandfather before she ever met you?"

"Dear aunt, did my grandfather exact a promise from her?"

"Yes, yes, my Lord; she did promise him that she would never marry you, and—she is very conscientious. But, oh——"

"Lady Hawren, you were once on the point of telling me what it was my grandfather had against me; but we were interrupted. I am sure Gaston set him against me in some way; and, dear aunt, you said he called for me and said he had done me an injustice. It was revealed to him, you thought."

"Yes; just a few moments before he breathed his last he fell into a gentle sleep. All thought him much better; he roused up with a startled look, terrible to behold, and, raising himself on one elbow, cried: 'I have wronged him! Oh, how I have wronged the noble boy! Clifton, Clifton! Oh, that I might see him once more, that I might retract all! Louise, would to God I had listened to your intercession in his behalf!' Then, dear Clifton, he fell back, and expired with your name on his lips."

"Then, dear aunt, if she were present and heard this, that he wished to retract everything, how can she still feel bound by the promise?"

"As I have said, my Lord, Kathryn is very conscientious; it may be she did not quite understand that he wished to retract all. My Lord, I will go at once and have a talk with her if you desire it. We have never conversed on this subject. I supposed that she would know that you were exonerated, that the promise was null and void; she may be laboring under the delusion that she is still bound by this promise. Poor child! I have wondered, my Lord, what trouble existed between you, for I saw there was something but

refrained from any interference, lest I should make matters worse; for you know 'tis said girls are governed by rules of contrariness, and oft will turn against their own hearts' interest when anxiety in their behalf is manifested by others."

As she rose to depart, he seized her hand, saying:

"Oh, dear aunt, do, if possible, induce her to look upon this matter in the proper light. I have been most unhappy, and have suffered much."

At this juncture Annie, Miss Augusta, Rosa and Nora came in. On seeing the Earl, Rosa cried:

"Oh, my Lord, there's a great storm arising! I am so glad you prevented us from going to the island!"

"Yes," said Nora; "a fine picnic we would have had—grand moonlight—my Lord, if it had not been for your good judgment."

"And your firmness, my Lord," added Rosa.

"I am glad, ladies, that I arrived in time to prevent your going. You may think I assumed unwarranted authority in forbidding you."

"My Lord, I suppose you have sailed 'the deep, deep sea' enough to become acquainted with the indications of a storm," said Miss Augusta.

"I have spent much of my time in company with old sailors, Miss Bruneaugh; and much of my time has been spent with old fishermen on the coast, near old Hawren Castle. I then learned what they call the signs of a squall." And rising, he said:

"Excuse me, ladies; I will look out and see what the prospect portends." And he passed into the hall.

Lady Hawren had gone to her room, and, as we have seen, sent Hortense to summon Lady Kathryn to her presence. As Kathryn entered, Lady Hawren said:

"Surely, Kathryn, you can now appreciate the Earl's good judgment in forbidding your going out to the isle this evening. See the dark clouds roll betwixt earth

and sky, forming a sombre canopy, bespeaking a fearful storm. How the wind lashes the trees, the sea roars! What would you do now upon the isle, where the sea is rolling in dark, swelling billows over the scene?" Lady Hawren stood beside a casement, looking outside. Now there was a clap of thunder, and the whole building seemed to tremble.

"That sounds like the Judgment! Oh, mother, I have been so naughty—but he used so much authority it made me angry! I have felt so—so ill toward my Lord. He—he's——" She hid her face upon her mother's bosom and sobbed.

"Darling, you love him; why do you deny him? Why abuse his love so?"

"Oh, mother! How *can* you? Have you forgotten my sacred promise to one now dead? Should I love a man who rests under such a dark cloud of suspicion? Mother, I supposed that you would be horrified at the thought; yet you have ever seemed to ignore any remembrance of—anything against him."

"Kathryn, he's the noblest man on earth; what do you mean?"

"Oh, mother, have you forgotten what our grandfather told us, and my promise never to marry Lord Clifton? And all before I knew he was my knight, whom I already loved—and——"

"Oh, Kathryn, did not you stand just behind my chair at grandfather's death, and hear him retract everything, call for Clifton, and wish for a few hours more of life in which to right the wronged Clifton; to change his will, and exonerate him from every false accusation that had been brought against him? And then——"

"Oh, mother, mother! Is this true? Can it be? I never heard a breath of it! Oh, darling mother, why have you kept this from me?"

"Child, I thought you and Flora stood behind my chair and heard every word—all he said."

"No, mother!" And Kathryn clasped her mother so close that she gasped for breath. "Flora and I had stepped out in the great hall to walk quietly up and down, when at the farther end we thought we heard his voice and stood listening a while; but understood nothing he was saying. Hastening back, we reached the door just as he sank back and expired."

"Then, dear child, you did not hear his dying words. It seems it had all been revealed to him in a vision—Clifton's innocence, and——"

"No, no! Oh, mother, tell me every word that he said!" And Kathryn stood with arms lovingly entwined about her mother, while Lady Hawren recounted what her grandfather had said on his death-bed. Kathryn gazed in her charming face and said:

"Oh, mother, mother! Why have not you told me this sooner? It would have saved me so much grief and pain! Oh, I loved him *so*, and feared to tell you—feared to love him—and tried to keep him from knowing that I loved him with my whole heart!"

"Darling, I thought you knew it all, and would feel that you were no longer bound by your promise; for in one word he retracted all, and you were free. 'Twas Gaston, no doubt, who tried to injure his cousin and turned grandfather against him. You must know, child, that Clifton is as pure and noble a man as lives."

"Oh, mother, I was afraid to, but have loved him since I first met him on the journey—you know, mother. And when I discovered my knight was the same grandfather told us about, one whom I must never love, I felt that I was dying, and swooned away. You remember when they brought me home nearly dead. I felt that I could not live. Mother, he is noble and good, and has so often urged me to relieve his

mind; for he loves me, oh, better than his life; and I had to harden my heart, for I loved him *so*! I have been so wicked and used him so badly since the fête, for he paid so much attention to the Baroness, and this morning—— Oh, mother, he said he would go to-day and offer her his hand if I would but say that I did not love him. But I did not—I could not speak. Oh, mother, *do* you suppose he has asked her? Oh, if he has! My heart stands still——”

“No, child; no! I know he has not, or he would not have said to me what he has said. He is anxious to make friends with you, for he thinks you are angry.”

“Mother, I have been so rude to him; and now am so happy! Mother, mother! And—I must see him this evening—and make up.” She hugged and kissed her mother extravagantly.

“Yes; go, now, darling, and—— Oh, you *are* dressed for the evening! Why, all in black, darling! Yet, 'tis pretty and most becoming. Go to him and keep him no longer in suspense; he is very unhappy.” Kathryn flew on wings of love back to Flora, and lay in her arms while they exchanged confidences.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE STORM—THE ABDUCTION.

“Hark the bells summon, and the bugle calls,
But she the fairest answers not—the tide
Of nobles and ladies throngs the halls
But she the loveliest must in secret hide.”

“OH, Flora, I do love him so that I would, like Psaphon, teach the birds to speak his name in every language and proclaim to the world the bliss I feel in

his dear love! Flora, where do you suppose this door leads to?" she asked, approaching a door on the right fastened with a long bar. She drew out the bar, and found the door opened into a long, dark corridor. "Oh, Dearest, don't you wish we could see the ghost that inhabits the west wing, the same that so bewildered us with affright a few evenings ago?"

"Indeed, I do not!" returned Flora.

"Now I will close it, and ring for Marie to fetch us some lights; then we will go seek the ghost. We'll search in the west wing amid the old halls and passages." She rang for Marie.

"Oh, my Lady! Are not you afraid? Think of it! Two girls in a dark passage, seeking for a ghost!"

"Flora, that just suits my present mood; we'll have lights. I'm so happy I do not know what else to do to while away the time until dinner, when I will meet my dear Lord and tell him all."

"Oh, Lady Kathryn, consider——"

"Sh! Sh! Say nothing to Marie——"

Marie entered.

"Marie, fetch us two rush-lights."

"Eh, bein! Two lights, Miladi? Zhall I nod light your lamp?"

"No, I want two lights on candlesticks; it is early to light the lamp yet. Bring two rush-lights, Marie, and say nothing to any one about it; but hasten! How the wind blows!"

"Ess, ess, Miladi; ze tourbillon!"

Marie soon made her appearance, bearing two rush candles on holders.

"Marie, is dinner near ready?" asked Kathryn.

"Ess, Miladi."

"Go, now, and return only when I ring for you," said Kathryn. And turning to Flora, who looked wonderingly on her, said: "I must explore this old passage, Flora; I must see the ghost. Isn't it strange

that as long as we have been in this haunted castle the men have never had the temerity to go out and search for the ghost, the apparition, we saw on that first night?"

"It is said the place is tenanted with restless ghosts; they have been frequently seen by the fishermen around, also that considerable terror has been excited among the domestics, some of whose sleeping apartments are in the basement," returned Flora.

"That is it, Flora; and we've never hunted once for them! Oh, I must see some of those spectres!" Kathryn declared, adjusting a soft mantle of black lace over her white shoulders, and taking up a light.

"Oh, Lady Kathryn, consider it is getting toward night, and we will be lost in the darkness!"

"No, no; we'll have our rush-lights! Come, my timid one; take this light and follow me. We will at least see where this passage leads; it may terminate in the old hall at the witches' stair, thence we can easily make our way through the corridor to the great-hall, where I shall find my dear Lord; and may even find him at the witches' stair or in the corridor, bemoaning his wrecked hopes, or trying to curb the turbulent passion raging in his bosom, where I will run to him, ask a thousand pardons, and tell him of my deep and lasting love. And, dear, you shall meet your Edwin!" Thus she rattled on, as she removed the long bar from the staples that held it in place. Holding high their lights, they wended their way down the long, dark passage; there were doors on either side, leading to empty rooms. At the farther end of this corridor was a stone stairs leading down.

"Let us descend," said Kathryn. But Flora drew back in terror.

"No, no, Kathryn; do not go down into that abyss!" she cried, in terror.

"Well, here's a door on the right of the stair; let us open it, it stands ajar." They entered and passed through a great old hall, where was much rubbish in heaps. They paused at a door in the wall at their left, and tried it, but it was secured on the inside.

"I cannot open this," said Kathryn; "but here is a place where the wall is broken down partially; let us look over and see what is beyond."

"Oh, I hear a noise!" cried Flora. "What is it?"

"I will look," said Kathryn.

"Oh, I fear!" cried Flora. "I hear a soft step—listen!" They stood, holding their lamps aloft, and peering into the darkness of the space beyond the broken-down partition.

"Oh, is this not interesting!" said Kathryn. "Let us approach nearer, and see if we can discover anything; let's get upon the wall."

"No, no; let——" They hear a grating sound, as if the fastening had been withdrawn from the door.

"Oh, Kathryn, I am terrified! Let us flee!"

"Wait! Look—oh——" A white-robed figure rose from out the dark space beyond, and appeared in the aperture. The girls drew back in affright. The apparition moved slowly along until opposite where they stood trembling. Then throwing up its hands imploringly, said:

"What seek ye here, misguided ones? Why seek to pry into things unearthly? Beware, beware! Oh, leave this awful place ere it be too late!" It paused, waving its hands; then continued: "Dost not thy heart quail within thee with deadly fear? Dost not thy courage fail thee? Fly, fly! Thou art lost forever if thou quit not this dark abode of death!"

The apparition, with a flourish of its long arms, disappeared. The girls had stood as if petrified. Now Kathryn, dropping her light, reeled against the wall and fell heavily to the floor near the door. The door

was shoved open a little way, a coarse arm was extended, she disappeared and the door closed. Flora, seeing this, stood as if rooted to the spot, still holding on to her light; then with a shriek she fled. Fairly dazed, she ran back through the old hall into the long, dark corridor, where her candle fell from her nerveless hand, expiring on the stone floor.

"The cry of the seabird is portentous of a storm," said Louis, coming in from the outside, as the Earl entered from the library where he had been conversing with Lady Hawren. His face was set and pale, his looks were downcast, and he walked with his hands behind him.

"The evening sun is sinking down behind huge piles of sable and crimson clouds; a sure sign of a storm at sea," said Guy, who stood at a window looking out upon the scene below.

"Aye," said Louis; "and his setting will be quenched 'like some champion in his last conflict, losing all his glory.'" The Earl approached and stood beside Edwin, who stood near an oriel window, listening to the heavy sounds from wind and wave moaning around rampart and buttress; for now the storm began to rage fiercely. There was a terrific crash, a vivid flash, and, looking forth, they could see in the gathering gloom great oaks surging, like billows, crashing and groaning. Windows clattered, doors clapped and banged.

"The storm descends with vengeance," said Edwin.

"Aye, Captain," returned Louis; "it howls and bellows like a wild beast."

Men and servants raved up and down the hall, looked out upon the evening, and vowed that no such storm was ever seen before.

"The spirit of the flood seems fully awake this evening," said Edwin.

"Aye," quoth Guy; "and so also is the spirit of the fell stalking abroad with the spirit of the deep; waves are chafing the mountainsides, the large oaks groan, and the rocks and hills echo back the sullen voices of Jupiter and Neptune."

"Aye, Guy, this is a fearsome storm! 'This dreadful night, that thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars as doth a lion,' will be heard from."

Within the Earl's breast raged a storm comparable with that outside. He joined not in their talk, but thus he communed with his own thoughts:

"Ever blessed light of my soul!" he groaned. "Untouched by my prayers; unvanquished by my pleadings; unmoved by my threats! The heartless love of admiration! Oh, whither shall I fly to mitigate the fever of love consuming this heart of mine! I am dominated by the mysterious tyranny of love, over which I have no power of resistance. This sickening 'hope deferred' is——"

"Aye, aye! 'On the dusk of the summer evening the blasting lightning broke.' Heard you not that? A shriek!" cried Guy.

"Distinctly!" cried Edwin.

"Hout, hout!" said Louis. "A sea gull's shriek, or the wind shrieking among the ruins." The Earl turned listlessly, then continued his musing:

"Hope has fled! Ah, never more will thy bright wing fan to a glow the dying embers in my heart! Ah, never, nevermore——"

"Guy, you and the Captain must be nervous; are you expecting the ghost again to make its appearance? 'Twas but the howling of the storm without——" The door leading to Kathryn's room flew open. Flora, with disheveled hair and face of marble whiteness, rushed in, screaming:

"Oh, my Lord! My Lord!" All turned instantly

toward her as she ran wildly to the Earl and threw herself upon his breast, crying:

"Lady Kathryn! Oh, poor Lady Kathryn!" The Earl, supporting her in his arms, exclaimed:

"Dearest, Dearest! What has frightened you? Where is Lady Kathryn?"

"The ghost—the ghost!" she managed to articulate; then swooned quite away.

"Oh, what is to be done?" cried his Lordship, as he carried Flora into the drawing-room, where all the ladies were gathered with Lord de Bruce and Lord Phantomfell in the centre of the room, some on sofas, some on chairs, listening to tales of wonderful storms in times gone by. All rose hastily as his Lordship entered; and he placed Flora gently on a sofa, requesting the ladies to attend her, saying:

"I am called elsewhere." Then he rushed wildly back into the hall, and cried: "Follow me, men! Ambrose! Andy! Sandy! Bring lights!" He met Marie running wildly from Kathryn's room. "Where is your mistress, Marie?"

"Oh, Milord, I do nod know! Zhe iss nod in her room, and here iss a door standing wide, witch has nod been before open."

"Here are arms, men! Captain Arranton, arm! Louis—Guy—arm yourselves!" Then using a little silver whistle, he blew a shrill blast; men came rushing in. Edwin appeared dazed; but, rousing, he armed himself along with the Earl. Seizing arms, Lord de Bruce and Lord Phantomfell joined them without knowing the cause of the disturbance.

"Louis, arm the men!" cried the Earl. Rapidly they snatched arms from the wall at the farther end of the hall. Guy ran to Annie, and said, in a soft whisper:

"Take care of Lady Hawren; Kathryn is missing."

They rushed into Kathryn's room and found the door, erstwhile fastened with a bar, standing wide

open, revealing to them a long, dark corridor. "Ian Macdonald," called the Earl, "lead the way with your light! Sandy, Andy, ahead with your lights!" Macdonald, closely followed by Sandy and Andy, proceeded down the dark passage, followed by the troupe of men, looking carefully to right and left; but all doors were carefully secured on the outside, as they could clearly see. On they hurried, pell-mell, their sabres rattling against the stone walls as they went. Reaching the stair at the end of the passage, Macdonald, Sandy and Andy stopped short on beholding the yawning abyss which presented itself to view. Guy seized the cresset from old Sandy, who stood shivering on the brink, saying:

"Go back and stay with the women, Sandy. On with your cressets, Macdonald—Andy! Follow me, men!"

"To the rescue! To the rescue!" cried Louis, as they rushed down the stone steps.

In the drawing-room consternation reigned supreme. The ladies gathered around poor Flora with smelling bottles and sweet marjoram water. As she began to regain consciousness Mrs. Macleod drew her head upon her bosom, and asked:

"Dearest, what has happened? What has frightened you so?"

"Lady Kathryn! Lady Kathryn!" she cried.

Lady Hawren, who had not missed Kathryn, pressed nearer, and asked in accents wild:

"Where is Kathryn? Oh, where is my child?" Annie received her in her arms as she fell fainting upon her breast.

"Hortense—help!" And with the help of Lady de Bruce, who hastened to her assistance, and Hortense, Annie placed her on the bed in her room adjoining. The men were all gone; the women were wild with excitement. Questions were plied, thick and fast, to

poor little Flora; but she only wept and wrung her hands, crying:

"Kathryn—the ghost! The ghost!"

Down the stone stairs went the men, on and on, through a cavernous room, finding at the farther end a door well secured; they burst it down, and found themselves in a large, square room, a basement beneath the square tower. At the right, in the opposite wall, a door stood ajar. Through this they rushed, into a low, narrow passage, so low they were forced to stoop. At the end of this narrow passage they entered a large cavern, where they felt the cool, damp sea air from the outside.

The Earl and Guy, who were in the lead, now made their exit on the sand of the shore, a narrow beach behind the square tower, closely followed by the rest. They walked up and down, waving their lights, utterly at a loss to know what course to pursue. Lord de Bruce, with Andy and Macdonald, was scouring the sands along the shore.

"I see no footprints," said he. "Have we not been too hasty in starting without first knowing something definite?"

The Earl, Guy and Louis, turning from the opposite direction, Guy said:

"Aye, my Lord, we may as well return; there are no footprints on the sand up this way, and we were headed off by a great rock jutting out into the sea. We must return; it may be that Flora has now come to her self, and can give us an explanation. We have, indeed, been too hasty. No one has passed this way."

"Aye," said Louis; "we have taken the wrong course, and have been too hasty in rushing off without first knowing something definite."

"Then she may be in one of the rooms," said the Earl, with ashen lips.

"Let us return," said Lord de Bruce, "and see what

the young lady can tell us." The wind came on with a fearful gust, rain began to fall in torrents. Macdonald and Andy withdrew inside the cavern, with their lights; others followed. The Earl, Louis and Guy, still peering into the darkness, stood at the exit ready to turn in. There was a flash; then a report from a pistol. Guy's light dropped to the ground and was extinguished. The flash revealed a dark object, at which Louis instantly fired three shots; but all seemed to strike the corner of the tower.

"Bring your light, Andy; here is someone!" They ran around the corner of the tower, along the sands; but were soon headed off by the huge stone jutting out into the sea.

"My Lord, there's nothing here but a queach and a huge stone barrier. The lights cannot live in this wind and rain. Hasten into the cavern, boys, with your cressets ere they are extinguished; Guy has lost his." Now they stood inside the cavern. There was a suppressed groan.

"What, Guy, are you hurt?" cried Louis.

"Oh, my friend," cried the Earl; "are you indeed hurt?"

"Only a scratch, I assure you, my Lord."

"Oh, Guy, I fear you are seriously wounded!"

"It is nothing to speak of, my Lord; I fear my left arm, with which I was holding the light, has been broken."

"I saw a dark object and fired several times," said Louis, "but believe I struck nothing but the corner of the tower."

"The ball whizzed over my shoulder, as I stooped a little to peer into the darkness; and, Guy, I feel sure that I was the target at which the aim was made," said the Earl.

"I thought he aimed to destroy my light, in order to make his escape; he must have had a boat," said Guy,

"His boat cannot live on these tempestuous waves," Louis said.

"We had best return," suggested Lord de Bruce, "and attend to Guy's wound; we can do nothing here. Now, Guy, old boy, let me assist you. Does it pain you much?"

"Not much; yet, Louis, I fear the bone is broken."

"I will hold it. Let me assist you," said the Earl tenderly. "We'll place you in the care of the good Doctor presently."

Rapidly they retraced their steps, throwing open every door and searching each room along the dark corridor, as they hastened back. There was nothing but vacancy; in some of the apartments the windows were out, and the wind howled, shrieked and moaned through in a most dismal way; the old shutters flapped and rattled; the storm was at its height.

On reaching Kathryn's room, they found a number of the women had gathered and were searching everywhere, looking under the bed, into the closet, behind curtains, in every conceivable place, for the missing one. When they discovered that Guy had been shot all shrieked; Annie sank into a chair, white as marble. The Earl and Louis conducted him into the great hall, and, placing him on a sofa, the Earl said:

"Now, Guy, I shall leave you to the tender mercies of Doctor Godkins, for I must see Flora at once."

"Go, go, my Lord!" The Doctor soon ascertained that there was nothing more serious than a broken arm, which, with the help of Lord de Bruce and Louis Kearney, was soon splintered and bound in a most satisfactory manner. Annie brought her red scarf for a sling; then at his request sat beside him, holding his other hand, while he told her all there was to tell about their search.

The Earl and Captain Arranton hastened to the drawing-room, where they found Flora restored to

consciousness, reclining in an easy-chair and nearly buried among the cushions. She was near swooning again on finding they had not brought Kathryn. The portieres were drawn aside, and they could see there was much confusion in Lady Hawren's room. The Earl sprang to Flora's side, and, dropping on his knees before her, seized her hands and cried:

"Oh, Dearest, Dearest! Tell me where you last saw Lady Kathryn. And what were you doing?"

"Lady Kathryn felt very badly when we left the courtyard——"

"She was angry?"

"Yes, my Lord, at first; but when the storm came on she was glad we did not go to the isle. She was nearly wild, and said she wished to explore the old halls in the west wing, and search for the ghost. She discovered she could open the door leading to a long corridor. We took lights, and went out in the dark passage——"

"Dearest, did you go down the stone stairway at the end of the corridor?" he asked anxiously.

"No, my Lord; I would not go. Then we turned to the right, through a door that stood ajar, entering into a great hall where we found a door fastened which she could not open. I urged her to go on, thinking we would soon reach the old corridor leading from the ruins to the great-hall, where we would join you, my Lord, with the others, for dinner. But there was an old partition wall broken down; in the aperture there appeared the ghost—oh, my Lord, the same one! Kathryn was so frightened she fell in a swoon, almost against the door, which now opened; a great hand was thrust in, which seized and dragged her through. My Lord, I was so petrified with fright I could not move. When I realized she was gone I turned with a shriek and fled back the way we had

come. In the long corridor I dropped my light; but found my way to you."

During this recital Edwin stood in the doorway leading to his aunt's room, looking on the pair with kindling cheek and flashing eye. He was greatly disturbed. Then hearing a moan from his aunt, he hastened to her side and clasped her in his arms. Her face was deadly white, and she moaned piteously:

"Oh, Edwin, have you found her?"

"No, dearest aunt; there is no trace of her." But, seeing she was near swooning, he continued: "But we will find her." Lightnings flashed, thunders roared, and rain poured down in torrents. The Earl rose to his feet, almost staggering under the weight of anguish, and said:

"Come, Captain; we must go to the rescue. Lady Kathryn, your cousin, has been abducted. I greatly fear she has been carried hence; we must go to her assistance. Since we have been here, a suspicious-looking brig has been seen standing at a distance in the bay, sometimes near, at other times afar off. We must search, even while the storm rages."

In the great-hall Lord de Bruce and Major O'Connor stood talking together. "Can anything be done before daylight?" asked Lord de Bruce.

"Nothing, nothing, I fear, in the midst of this storm!" returned the Major. "My Lord Fleetwood, let us hold a consultation." And while they were in consultation the storm subsided to some extent.



CHAPTER XLIV.

KATHRYN IN PRISON.

"The moon on the east oriel shone
Thro' slender shafts of shapely stone,
By foliage teacery combined."

WHEN Kathryn regained consciousness she was in utter darkness, save for a little light flecked in from a latticed oriel high up on the wall. Remembering the ghost, and finding herself alone, she shuddered; a sickening terror shot through her soul, but she lay still, listening. The moon was now out in all its splendor only momentarily, and threw a stream of mournful light through the oriel. Recalling all, she started up; clasping her hands, she raised her eyes in prayer:

"Holy Father, defend me from evil!" She gazed around in the imperfect light. "There are grates and bars about me; a vaulted roof is overhead. I am sorely punished for my hasty temper; how very wicked I have been, and my noble Lord is so good! I have tried his soul, and if—suppose he has offered himself to Lady Hermione, and has been accepted! But here am I, all mewed up in a cell. Oh, what is to be my fate? When shall I ever see him more, to beg his sweet pardon! Oh, just as I was so happy—a weary life I should live without him! Oh—oo!" she screamed. "Who's this?"

"It's just me, my Lady; come to see if you are wanting anything."

"Oh," cried Kathryn, seeing a woman by her side, "were you with me?"

"Just back of yon heavy curtain, where I was sleeping, my Lady."

"I am glad I was not alone! Oh, I have been so frightened! How came I here?"

"Indeed, you was brought here, my Lady."

"Who brought me?"

"My husband. It was he found you in the old haunted hall."

"Where's my friend Flora?"

"The lady fled, went back the way she came, screaming."

"Yes, screaming; I seem to still hear her shriek."

Sit down near and tell me where I am and why I am here. You seem kindly." And Kathryn turned her feet off the old settee on which she had found herself and made space for the woman.

"Thank you kindly," she said, as she seated herself beside Kathryn. "As I have said, my husband brought you here, Lady."

"Why? Did he rescue me from the ghost?"

"Oh, there's no ghost! 'Twas I trying to warn you, Lady."

"Oh, you were a ghost just in fun, to frighten us? Where is he now—your husband? Will he not take me back to my friends?"

"Gone to the ship, Lady, to inform my Lord of his good fortune. He has been for days and days trying to lay hands on you and carry you on shipboard." Kathryn trembled visibly, and asked in a quaking voice:

"Who is 'my Lord'?"

"My Lord Graeme, Gaston." With a deep groan Kathryn sank back in a prolonged swoon.

As Donald Dhu swung himself on deck of the *Merry Dancer* he heard Lord Graeme's voice in the cabin:

"With moonlight beaming
Thus o'er the deep,
Who'd linger dreaming
In idle sleep?
Leave joyless souls to live by day,
Our life begins with yonder ray.
And while thus brightly the moments flee,
Our bark skims lightly
Over the sea!"

He found his Lordship in the cabin with the pilot, drinking, and singing merrily. On seeing Donald at the door, Lord Graeme started up hastily, and asked:

"What word, what word, Donald Dhu? God's sake, I have been quite anxious since the storm came up!"

"Oh, my Lord, Captain! A storm, I should say, sure enough! 'Twas all we could do to manage the boat, the three of us, but got here at last after a fearful tussle. Now I would speak alone with your Lordship."

Gaston motioned the pilot away, who left the room sullenly enough.

"In God's name, Donald, have you shot him? I heard the report of several guns. What have you done?"

"Done! You'll say done! I done more than I expected to do this time."

"What? Oh, say what! Oh, how impatient I am!"

"You are impatient, I admit, my Lord. Well, in the first place, I got the bird I have for days been trying to lay hands on."

"What! Sure? Why in thunder did not you bring her on, then?"

"Well, I think you ought to be glad enough that I have got here safe without wanting to have her drowned. I'd never got here safe with her; she'd swooned dead away. I had to leave her and Jenny and get away as soon as possible. They were hot after me, I tell you."

"What! Left her with your wife? Will they not be discovered?"

"No; not under the old tower behind the secret stair. I left her in Jenny's care till we can come and fetch them. We'll have to bide our time."

"What was the firing I heard?"

"Why, just as I came out from under the big rock, and turned at the corner of the old tower to take boat, the whole crowd came out of the cavern and nearly ran over me. It was too good an opportunity to miss. I singled him out and fired; I'm sure he's well done

for, but had no time to wait, for I was fired on by the whole posse, and barely had chance to make my escape; and should not if it had not been for the rain. It began to pour down and the men carrying the lights ran back into the cavern."

"Well, well! Donald, you are a trump; and have succeeded far better than I had ever hoped. But do you suppose we can ever elude their vigilance and bring her off? Oho, my pretty Lady; by all the gods if ever I get you in my power I'll show you how to scorn a Graeme! We'll have to slip in to-morrow night and get them. Do you think that Jenny can be trusted?"

"No trouble about that, she cannot help herself; they are both securely locked in the dungeon of the old tower."

"Jenny is tender-hearted, Donald, you know."

"Yes, I know; but I took no risk; they are safe. And the secret door is heaped up with rubbish. I saw to that ere I left."

"Well, Donald, if your aim was sure—and we must make sure of that—and we are successful in bringing off my Lady to-morrow night and unloading the cargo, we will set sail immediately and get away from all danger. Then, Donald, as soon as you can land me on the coast of France with my Lady—my Countess—this brigantine and all on board is yours. You've done me good service, and I am willing to see you well rewarded."

"Well, Captain, my Lord, there's no telling how vigilant they may be; and I was thinking the sooner we get away from here the better. Could not we go over and fetch them before daylight?"

"Faith, man, the moon is shining now as light as day; and unless it clouds over again we'll have no darkness! By all the gods, I wish you had brought her along, man; then we'd be through with all, except

this cargo that must yet be stowed away. And yet had I her here I'd not stay nor risk anything for the cargo."

"That was impossible, my Lord; impossible! I had either to stay there with them or make my way to the boat and come back with Buck Macdonnel and Bill Turner; and I would not have been able to do the latter but for the torrent of rain that began to fall and drove them to shelter to save their lights. But, my Lord, we'll have to go and fetch them to-night or never; for by to-morrow night the whole of Carlisle will be out with the militia, and we'll be closely watched, and every vessel on Solway's coast will be on our track; and the more I think of it the plainer I see it must be done to-night. There's no mistake!"

"Well, Donald, the sooner the better say I; only, how are we to do it when they are on the alert?"

"Their vigilance will not abate, but grow stronger; and here's my plan: They are up now searching the place, high and low, and will be until near daybreak, when they may let up for a little rest; then if there is cloud and rain—which I foretell from the growling thunder that continues to roar—we can draw up near as possible and slip in under the old rock as we have done for the past few days and through the tunnel from the old church to the vault, where I left them, and fetch them out."

"This is well, Donald, unless the windows and doors we have planked up are ripped open and they are found ere we reach them."

"We must try it; to wait will be ruinous. We'll hover up as near as possible with the brig, then one hour before daylight we'll take boats and go over, and while the men unlade slip in through the tunnel and get them."

"We? Yes, Donald, I will go with you. I wish to

fetch her myself. In the meantime, tell me how you ever managed to get her?"

"It was all luck, my Lord; I just happened to get there in time. I went in through the cavern and could not find Jenny; seeing the door leading to the secret entrance under the stair standing open, I went through and up the flight of steps; then I heard her voice. Thinks I: 'What in thunder is this?' I crept on, and there she stood upon the wall, with a sheet around her. I saw a light through the old partition, and, slipping up, placed my eye to the crack, and there I saw the very bird I wanted with little Flora, and no one else. I hastily slipped the bar from the door. That startled them; and about that time Jenny stepped out into the aperture; they took her for a ghost, I suppose."

"Sure enough! She was playing ghost for them!"

"Yes, my Lord; and they were frightened near to death; nothing could have happened better to my purpose. The Lady swooned near the door. I reached in and got her without being seen by Flora, who went screaming and, I suppose, notified them all. I quickly secured the door on the outside and said to Jenny: 'What the thunder are you doing up here, anyway? Come along with me!' and nearly frightened her to death (she is awfully afraid of me). We ran down the long stairway, then turned and passed through the hole or secret door behind all that rubbish under the steps, and, finding ourselves in the dungeon, turned into the suite of rooms Jenny and I use when I am in and times are good. I placed her on the old sofa, and bade Jenny see to her, while I secured the door and brought away the key. My Lord, do you expect her to marry you when she knows you have stolen her away and killed her lover? She'll never do it!"

"If he's only dead, that is all that I ask. Why, I'll make her believe she was stolen away by the pirates and I have come to her rescue; and when she knows

for good he is dead and I am the Earl she'll be glad to marry me—and will, or it will be worse for her! Let me alone for that; I'll fix it up. She did not see you, you say?"

"Why, no, my Lord; she was in a dead swoon when I picked her up."

"Then I will work it; I will win, 'if not by love by might.' She shall never escape me! 'What matter if I use force or fraud, if success but crown my efforts'?"

"The moon's obscured, and it's raining again, my Lord."

* * * * *

All through the long night the men had kept up the search; some bursting through false doors into secret cells, while others went outside and searched amid the ruins of the old castle and the old Abbey Church. But now the moon was again obscured, and, being exhausted, they decided to rest for a few hours, until the gray streaks of dawn began to show up in the east.

One hour before dawn Captain Arranton, supposing all others to be at rest, walked wretchedly up and down the flagged floor where he had first walked with Flora, his thoughts anything but pleasant, for a potent rage surged within his breast. He was experiencing something never before felt in his young heart. And now, on taking a few strides farther than his measured beat, he came face to face with the Earl, who, believing himself the only one who was not having a little rest, walked restlessly to and fro in front of the witches' stairway.

With fiery eyes and angry brow, Edwin hailed him thus:

"Well met, my noble Lord of Fleetwood! Hold, sir; hold! We are all plunged in deep and dark distress; nevertheless, I demand redress for an insult heaped on me through my noble cousin!"

"What can be the meaning of this, Edwin? Insult? I look upon you as my dearest friend, excepting Guy, who has been so long a time with me."

"Draw your blade and prepare to defend yourself, my Lord; for nothing but blood, your heart's best blood, can wipe out so great an insult, not alone to myself but to one to whom you have dared to pay your addresses while, with the most endearing epithets, you embrace another, not only in the presence of the servants, but in the presence of all your followers. It is my understanding, my noble Lord, that you have asked the hand of my cousin in marriage; and it is well known throughout your following and all the household; and that her mother, my noble aunt, consents to the union. And here you openly and flagrantly display to all that your best affections are engaged with another, while you have offered your hand in marriage to my cousin, Lady Kathryn Arranton, a lady of great honor and wealth, and have her mother's consent. You told me this yourself and that but a quibble, a promise of some sort, extorted from her in an unthinking moment, was all that prevented the union——"

"Hold, hold, young Hotspur! In Heaven's name, what mean you? This is some incomprehensible mistake! Captain, this is utter madness——"

"How am I to reconcile this with the fact that in a moment of great excitement a young lady rushes into your arms, where she is closely held, in the presence of two or three dozen men, and where with the most endearing terms you hold her until she swoons away——"

"Edwin, Edwin! You are wild! Pray, let——"

"Is it possible, my Lord, that while you offer to join fortunes with my cousin that your warmest love is given to another? And do you think for one moment that my noble cousin or *I* will submit to any-

thing so disgraceful and humiliating? Draw, my Lord, and defend yourself, for blood must flow to atone for this dastardly affront to a name that knows not how to brook an insult. My Lord, an honorable and high-toned gentleman would not stoop so low! Now, draw your sword!" And Edwin's blade flashed menacingly in the dim light.

The Earl gently placed his hand on Edwin's arm, saying:

"Dear boy, there is nothing wrong in all this; you see things in a false light. But, my heavens, let us hasten out again to the rescue of Lady Kathryn; daylight is coming on apace——"

"Hold! Not so fast! Your pretended haste shall not serve you at this time. This matter must be settled here and now. My cousin shall not be publicly used in this manner—this shameful manner——"

"My dear boy, sheathe your sword, for we will have no contest at this time. Come, walk with me while I shall explain all in a few moments to your satisfaction. I am in the deepest affliction over the abduction of your cousin; and your gross accusation adds much to my grief. You are excited, Edwin, and are laboring under a great mistake." He locked arms with Edwin, and they walked up and down before the witches' stair. So charmingly innocent was the Earl's air, so winning and persuasive his manner, that Edwin, in spite of himself, felt reassured. "I realize your mistake, Edwin, and it is not so very surprising that you have fallen into this error, though I am surprised at the vehemence you exhibit. Flora and I were brought up together, and I feel toward her just as I suppose I should feel toward a sister. She is one of the sweetest and most angelic creatures I——" Edwin almost drew away, but the Earl held on to his arm. "Listen, Edwin, and save yourself further distress. After I was seven years old much of my time was spent at

Hawren Castle with my aunt, Mrs. Macleod and little Flora. Then they moved to Fleetwood; she was the pet of the household and her love-name was 'Dearest.' I knew no other name for her; the endearing epithet of her mother became the love-name for her of all. I ever called her by this sobriquet until my return from the Continent. Since, I have tried to call her by her own beautiful name, Flora, for in my absence she had grown to be quite a young lady. But I not unfrequently fall into the old habit; and when, on last evening, she rushed so wildly into my presence with the exclamation 'Lady Kathryn, Lady Kathryn!' I was so startled that I did not even know that I *did* use the old familiar sobriquet." Edwin, with an expression of great relief of his fine face, grasped the hand the Earl extended with so much ardor and earnestness that after scrutinizing his face the Earl exclaimed:

"Ha, Edwin! I begin to see a little deeper in this matter! Why, my fine boy, you love Flora yourself, with your whole soul!"

"How can you say that, my Lord?" asked Edwin, in some confusion.

"Why, Captain, it is manifest in your behavior. Ha, it was not so much the imaginary misdemeanor on my part toward your sweet cousin as jealousy on yours! I give you great joy, Captain; on my soul, you do well if you win her love. She is the finest girl in the land, save one."

"An' I do love her; what then?"

"She is a woman well worthy to be won."

"But you must know the difference, my Lord; there is a disparity of birth. Yet, she is quite a lady. I admit I do love her; yet, my Lord, she has no hereditary claim to distinction."

"Hath the pearl less whiteness because of its birth?
Hath the violet less brightness for growing near earth?"

"Edwin, would you choose for yourself wealth or name? Seek you a wife to give you wealth or fame? It is thus that peasants do bargain for wives, as men buy horses or cattle. It is my notion that marriage without love will prove a continual discord and strife—a hell itself—while to wed for love would prove a heaven of bliss. As I have said, Edwin, she has ever been the pet of the household. After my aunt came to live with my grandfather, Flora was given every advantage a nobleman's daughter could have. True, her mother—a most excellent woman, who was for years my aunt's companion and friend—lays no claim to rank or birth, electing to remain here after the death of my aunt, as housekeeper, rather than go out into the world. Her position in my grandfather's family was that of a lucrative sinecure. Lady Hawren, my Aunt Margaret, loved Flora as her own child; and took upon herself the supervision of her education; kept a governess for her. Then the Convent of St. Mary's being so near, she was kept under the best teachers of that place also."

"Oh, my Lord, I find myself in a great strait! Flora returns my love with ardor. Yet is the hand of fate against me. I love her as my life; yet she is the daughter of an upper servant in your employ, while my ancestors were of irreproachable lineage. Then her—her—father!"

"I know nothing of her father, save that he was a seaman; a ship's captain, I believe."

"It will never do, my Lord; my pride rebels. I must crush this love from my life!"

"At the same time crush her loving heart, Edwin? I warn you now, with all your pride, be careful!"

'One heart, free, trusting;
Nature's breath and bloom,
Is worth a thousand slaves to Mammon's gain.'

"Captain, a pure woman's love is above all earthly price."

The words of the Earl were like sunbeams breaking through and dispersing the clouds which had lowered over him since his talk with his aunt.



CHAPTER XLV.

THE RESCUE.

"—fear and anger, with alternate grace,
Pant in her heart, and vary in her face."

ONE hour before daybreak Kathryn walked the floor of the old prison vault. The window, high upon the wall and opening on the sea, would have admitted a flood of moonlight but for the heavy black clouds intervening, which continued to roll and boil like a seething cauldron.

Jenny had lighted a little lamp, which was suspended from the wall by a chain. There was almost no furniture in the room. A small table on which was an ewer of water, some drinking cups or beakers, and a couple of trenchers, and the old sofa constituted the contents of this room, which was "without vain art or curious complement." In the adjoining room was a couch, near the head of which was a tall tripod or stool.

Her sombre robe of velvet and rich black lace, devoid of decoration save a brooch and necklace of pearls, fell in rich folds about her elegant form, and the soft lace mantle fell negligently, one end over her white shoulder, the other trailing the floor most gracefully; her gold-brown hair, all unconfined, fell in ringlets about her face and even down to her waist.

"Oh, Jenny, how long am I to remain here, in this dark abode? What is to become of me?"

"Oh, Lady, I know little of the plans of my Lord; but——"

"How *dare* he capture and imprison *me*!" she cried, stamping the ground indignantly, her face flaming, her eyes sparkling with anger.

They hear footsteps outside, a ponderous bolt is turned, the door opens, and Gaston Graeme stood before her. She trembled visibly, but with haughty mien she faced him. Gaston sprang forward with an expression of joy on his face, which was marred with an ugly cicatrice on one cheek, beyond a doubt inflicted by the heavy hand of Hector, giving to his not over-handsome face a less pleasing appearance.

"Oh, how glad am I, dearest Lady Kathryn, that I have found you! How very fortunate! I have come to save you from the fearful pirates into whose hands you have fallen. How fortunate that I chanced to arrive just in time to join your friends in the search for you!"

"How dare you, sir!" she said, choking with rage.

"Sweet cousin, we have no time to lose. Let us hasten to your poor mother, who is nearly wild with grief at your disappearance. Come! Your captors may return at any moment, shoot me, and bear you hence." He approached to take her hand, but she drew back, crying:

"Traitor! Why come you with falsehood on your lips?"

"No, dearest cousin, child of the morning, I have found you alive and well; only trust me and let me save you from those foul pirates who infest this place; and who on last night in a *mêlée* slew the noble Earl of Fleetwood and who will come presently, beyond a doubt, to bear you hence on shipboard and over the sea."

She seemed turned to stone; she clasped her hands and exclaimed wildly: "You have killed him! You

have killed him!" He expected her to swoon, then he would carry her away; but she did not.

"Oh, no, cousin; not I! The pirates who have you in their power. Come, ere they return; let me take you to your sweet mother, who is wild with uncontrollable grief at your abduction. I have but just arrived at the old castle, and, finding your mother distraught with anxiety, at her request joined in the search. How glad she will be that I have found you!"

"Is he—is he, indeed, slain?"

"We are not quite certain on that point; but come, we will go and ascertain," he said, feeling that he was beginning to gain her confidence.

Kathryn was wavering; she was so wretched and so wished for a friend just now, any one who would only take her to her mother; and, feeling that she must swoon from terror, she cast an inquiring glance at Jenny, who sat just inside the next apartment, screened from Gaston's view by the partition. Jenny, comprehending her glance, quickly shook her head, indicating that she could not trust him. Drawing back as far as possible against the wall, with superb scorn she stood before him, her eyes flashing fire, her cheeks aflame with potent rage.

"Thou false Gaston!" she cried, stamping her little sandalled foot. "You might, for your pertinacity, be called Phœbus Apollo! I would rather, by far, be seized by a hungry lion and torn to shreds than to be rescued by such as you, who have dragged me away from my friends and confined me in this dungeon! You have—you—you——" She choked up; she could not speak, so overcome was she with rage. She would not trust him, neither did she swoon; he should have to take her away by force, and that instantly; there was no time to lose. He said:

"Yes, gentle cousin, you are my captive. But I beg to assure you I shall show you so much courtesy and

love that you will think your prison does much outmatch whatever pleasures your liberty may have known; you shall have no other prison but my chamber, and no other jailer than myself. Come, sweet, sweet one!"

"Never! Thou villain!" And she shrank with horror at his nearer approach. His face grew dark with anger, and he said:

"You *shall* go with me! Three strong men stand without to bear you hence." And stretching forth his hands, he would have grasped her arms, but hearing an unusual noise, he turned quickly and looked outside.

* * * * *

"What has come over me! In spite of myself, my heart is light—lighter than for days. How encouraging the Earl's talk! The noble Earl, who has been brought up with her, and has heard never a word against her father! May he not have been an honorable man? My aunt may have been misled; some unworthy person, possibly, has made this story which my aunt has heard. People are so quick to listen to anything derogatory to a man's character. Yes, the Earl is right—he certainly knows best: 'A pure woman's love is above all earthly price.' And Shakespear says: 'Tis better to be lowly born and range with humble lives in content than to be perked up in a glistning grief and wear a golden sorrow.' Love is blind and cannot see."

Edwin walked on tiptoe up the great-hall, in order not to awaken or disturb those who were there trying to get a few moments' rest. On into the drawing-room he went, thinking he wished to ascertain how his aunt was now resting before starting out once more on the search the moment they could detect a signal of daylight. At his aunt's door he paused and asked of Lady de Bruce if his aunt had obtained any rest.

She assured him that Lady Hawren had just fallen into a gentle slumber, the first moment of quiet she had enjoyed. Among the number watching about Lady Hawren's bed he saw not the one for whom his restless eye was seeking. Turning disappointedly about, he crossed the drawing-room, in which a light burned dimly, yet saw not that sweet form. Drawing aside the portieres at the library door, he stepped inside. A streak of dim light fell through the space above the tapestry, by which he recognized a form "divine" beside the window, almost enveloped in the Persian hangings. He realized in a moment 'twas Flora, and flew to her side; and found her weeping for her dear friend Kathryn. Through the night there had been no rest for any. The ladies had attended Lady Hawren in her great distress. Silently he took her yielding hand, and, pressing it to his lips, he said:

"Weep you here, dear Flora, for my sweet cousin?"

"Oh, Captain, where is she? Who has carried away my sweet friend?"

"Dry your tears, sweet friend; we go even now to find her; I feel assured that we will be successful in our efforts when we may have the friendly aid of daylight. You may now see from this window, sweet Flora, the streaks of gray which portend the near approach of dawn." Bowing her head to wipe away the tears, a golden shower fell around her face; he lifted the soft tresses back on her shoulders, and, drawing his arm around her waist, he said softly:

"Dearest! Dearest!"

She looked up quickly, questioningly; he had recently appeared so distraught and unhappy.

"Will not you now tell me your sobriquet, your love-name? You promised me; 'sometime,' you said."

Looking steadily into his eyes, she answered: "Dearest."

"Yes, yes; 'Dearest.' I found it out! Now may I not call you so always?"

"You may, Edwin," she returned softly.

"Then, oh, Dearest, Dearest! Will you be my——"

"Captain! Captain Arranton, someone called quite near. We must be getting on now, and you must take command of a troop."

Giving her a hasty and rapturous kiss, Edwin reached the door just as Louis drew aside the drapery and said:

"Oh, here he comes! Captain, I trust you have had a refreshing rest; but now we can wait no longer, the night is spent and we must away." He then heard the Earl calling the men to action:

"'Rouse, 'rouse, my men, to action! My cousin languishes in prison somewhere amid these old ruins, and we must hasten to her assistance. We will soon have the benefit of daylight. This old castle must be searched from turret to dungeon."

"'Rouse, men; 'rouse yourselves to action!" cried Louis. "And let us forth like gallant knights to the rescue of the fair Lady. Arm, arm! An' it had not rained Jeddart Staffs all night we might ha' done somewhat ere this."

"Captain Arranton, let us select ten men, and we will go down the long corridor—the way we first went last night—and I will ask Lord de Bruce and Major O'Connor to select ten men each and pass out at the corridor to our right and among the ruins of the old Abbey Church," directed the Earl, who looked pallid and most wretched.

"Are you well weaponed, my men?" asked Edwin.

"Aye, aye; well weaponed, Captain; well weaponed, and fear neither dog nor devil; and will find the dear Lady or die in the effort!" said Louis.

"Twue, twue, Mistuh Keaahny! Damme, we go to do ow die!" said Lord Phantomfell, as they filed out

through Kathryn's room and down the long corridor.

Doctor Godkins was left with the ladies and Guy, who would have gladly accompanied them but for his wound, which was very painful. Annie sat beside him and offered him consolation as they watched the men filing from the great-hall in three different directions.

Captain Arranton and the Earl, side by side, led the way down the long corridor; instead of descending the stairway at the farther end, they turned to the right, and ascending a flight of steps, made their way into many rooms with innumerable doors and windows, all securely planked up. Eagerly and quickly the men ripped the planks from a door, thus gaining ingress to a large room they had not before entered. Pausing, they looked about; then from room to room they ran, ascending and descending stairways, looking into closets and side rooms; then, after descending a long stair, they discovered a heap of rubbish—old boxes and broken furniture—heaped up behind the stairway. On clearing away this rubbish, a secret door was found, fastened on the opposite side. This was forthwith broken in, and, passing through, they entered a long passage, at the farther end of which was found a flight of steps leading down, a heavy stone wall on either side. Down these steps they went, pell-mell. Halfway down they had a glimpse of three figures flitting past in the room below, followed presently by another in great speed. Having scarcely any light, they could not tell who they had seen.

"Forward, men!" cried Captain Arranton.

"Follow, follow, boys!" cried the Earl. At the foot of the stair Edwin with his men turned to the right after the fugitives, who were now seen dashing through a doorway in the opposite side of the great vault in which they now found themselves.

Looking to the left whence the fugitives had sped, the Earl saw a door standing ajar. Stepping softly

up to it, thinking there were possibly others, and holding his pistol ready to fire, with his foot he shoved the door wide. "Surely Eros was directing his steps," for at the farther side of the room, even against the wall, Lady Kathryn stood, holding her breath, as if awaiting a visit from Nemesis, her eyes flashing in anger, which "still was sweet." He stood rooted to the ground with surprise, his pistol aimed directly at her head. How his heart bounded with joy. "But hope's bright wing was checked with fear" on beholding the proud anger depicted in her face. And recalling the angry flashes she had given him at their last meeting, he wondered how she would receive him. His pistol fell to the floor with a crash.

Now she seemed ready to swoon with surprise and seeing the Earl stand before her in all his glorious manhood.

"Have I at last found you, my angel!" he cried, his fears soon turned into joy; for with a look of unutterable joy and disregarding all conventionality, she stretched forth her hands and cried, as she ran to him and twined her arms about his neck:

"You are not dead! You are not dead!" and sank on his bosom in a blissful swoon. Looking about to see if there was any one else here, he saw Jenny standing in the door of her room.

"Are there any men about?" he asked.

"No, my Lord; there was but one in here, and he fled."

"We are then safe from interruption?"

"Yes, I think so, my Lord; but in order to make it doubly safe I will fasten the door on the inside," she said, as she slipped a bar through the hasps.

"Can you aid me to restore the Lady?"

"Oh, sir, I will do all possible for her! Please, sir, lay her in here on this bed, my Lord!" They placed her on Jenny's couch, and he sat beside her on the

high stool which stood by the bed head, still holding her fair face close up against his shoulder; for she rested on his arm, as though he could not let her go. He smoothed back her clustering hair, soothing her cheeks and forehead with his right hand.

Jenny, wiping the tears from her eyes, assisted him, chafing her hands, and talking all the while.

"I suppose you are the one—are you the Earl of Fleetwood?"

"Yes," he replied, tenderly stroking Kathryn's brow.

"Oh, poor darling!" she continued, again having recourse to the corner of her apron; for her sympathetic tears flowed freely. "That is why she fainted; she was told you had been killed."

"Who was it rushed from this room but now?"

"Lord Graeme, my Lord; he told her that you were shot last night. Oh, poor dear! It near killed her!"

"Oh, the villain! Have you been with her all the time? Oh, darling, darling! Open your eyes, and speak to me!"

"Yes, my Lord; since she was brought here in a swoon last evening. We were both locked up here overnight, while Donald, who brought her, went back to the ship to fetch my Lord Graeme, or I would have notified you in some way."

"Thank you, my good woman! You were not then partaker in this crime?"

"Oh, my Lord, no! I would have warned her away, and did try; but Donald kept such close watch over me."

"Could you bring a little water, my good girl?"

Jenny ran into the next room to get some water from the ewer there. Close to his bosom he held "that form of maiden loveliness," longing yet fearing to meet those dark-brown eyes. Would she again drive him from her? The fringed lids quiver; slowly her eyes are opened, and with a look of intense love she

smiles sweetly up in his face. All anger and dismay had passed from that fair brow; her heart beat wildly against his own; her smile was one of sweetest contentment. His fears were banished, for, blushing like a rose, she twined her arms about his neck. Wildly he kissed her lips, as she sank into a rapture, or semi-syncope.

Jenny returned with a jug of water; and, as she bathed Kathryn's face, his Lordship asked:

"Who was it, you said, brought her here—Donald who?"

"My husband, sir; Donald Dhu, captain of the brig yonder."

"Ah!"

"I wished to keep her away, sir; for I knew my Lord Graeme wished to get her and had bargained with Donald to capture her and set them on the coast of France, where he has a château, my Lord. He was to give Donald the brig for it, sir; the *Merry Dancer*. Donald is not so bad, my Lord; but wished, more than all things, to own a good ship, sir. I saw them walking in a large old hall, sir, my Lady here and another one, and made myself a spectre to frighten them away; said all I could to frighten her so that she would stay away from the ruins. She was sorry frightened, your Lordship; indeed, she swooned, and just then I saw my husband coming. He stopped, and, prying through a crevice, said: 'She is the very one I want!' And, reaching in, he brought her out. Making me follow, he took her to our own rooms and locked us both in. Lord Graeme and three men came over this morning to carry us on board the brig. And soon we would have been on the way to France had not your Lordship found the hidden entrance to this part of the vaulted basement. Lord Graeme owns a château on the French coast where he intended to keep her until she would consent to marry him."

Kathryn opened her eyes. The Earl put his face down close to hers, and said:

"Darling, darling! Have I found you at last, and safe from harm? 'Tis heaven to hold you once more to my breast! Surely Eros directed my steps and led me to you." He felt through every nerve and vein a glow of ardor, an ecstasy of joy. More dear to him was each dawning smile and bright glance of eye, since the slight estrangement which had existed for the few days past between them.

"Yes, yes, my sweet Lord! And so happy! They told me you were dead; I felt I could not live, for, oh, I do love you so! And I know now—it was false! You have been cruelly wronged, my own! And, my noble, sweet Lord, that promise that held me from you is null; it was absolved at my grandfather's death—mother told me. I am your own! I have been unkind to you; but it was because my poor heart was breaking and I feared you would know how much I loved you. I did not know, then, what my mother has since told me. That promise is no——" He kissed her repeatedly and said:

"Darling, you are my treasure! And now that I have found you I cannot let you go again."

"My Lord, after mother had told me all—that promise was not binding, and everything—I was hastening to tell you, so happy was I. We were going to surprise you, by passing through the ruins by a door we had found. I thought to find you somewhere, tell you all, and ask your sweet pardon a thousand times for my cruelty. I loved you so, my Lord! But feared to let you know. I ask you to forgive——"

"Darling, I freely forgive you as I would be forgiven. Do I then rest in your sweet forgiveness?"

"Truly, my sweet Lord, I have naught to forgive; in all things you have been gloriously noble! How could my heart so rebel against my reason, and how

could my tongue so rebel against my heart?" Her beauty was heavenly, radiating purity and innocence; and there was a tender magic in her voice which touched and fell like gentle dew on his heart, melting him to tears.

"Darling, what a blessed meeting is this after a day and night of unutterable anguish, once again to hold you to my breast—which shall henceforth be thy resting place!"

Kathryn now noticed Jenny, who stood near by wiping her streaming eyes. Making an effort to rise, the Earl raised her to a sitting posture on the side of the bed, and she said:

"My Lord, this is the kind woman whose companionship and sweet sympathy I have had since I was brought to this place."

"I am bound to you, good woman, for the service and kind sympathy you have rendered this lady during her imprisonment." Drawing a very pretty though not a showy ring from his little finger, he said:

"Will not you wear this for her sake?"

"My Lord—thank you—it was a sad pleasure to me to be able to serve this dear lady; besides, only doing my duty to a noble lady in distress."

"Come, darling, I must restore you to your mother, whose heart is breaking. Think you that you will be able to ascend the many stairways and traverse the long halls intervening between this place and the drawing-room, even if it be possible for me to find the way back through the winding labyrinth of passages and stairs?"

"I will rise, my Lord, and see if I have strength to walk; my nerves have been greatly wrought upon, through suffering and terror." And leaning on his arm, she walked the floor to try her strength. "But, my Lord, how is it you are all alone in your search for me?"

"Edwin and the men have gone in pursuit of one whom we saw fleeing from this apartment as we descended the stairway outside here."

"My sweet Lord, did you know who it was?"

"No, sweet love, I did not; I had only a glimpse of someone fleeing in an imperfect light. But this woman has told me the shameful truth. Perhaps, good woman, you can direct us out of this place, and save us going the roundabout way which I came. Come, sweet love"—drawing her mantle about her shoulders and giving her another warm kiss—"I must restore you to your mother; then look after my men."

Jenny unbarred the door, saying:

"Then come this way, my Lord. I can soon put you in the long corridor that will lead you to the part occupied by your friends."

The Earl placed his arm about Kathryn to lend her assistance for the olng tramp, for he found her very weak; and they followed Jenny, who, instead of taking the stairway down which the Earl had come, went behind this and, removing some rubbish, opened a plank door through which they passed, and found themselves in the great cavern through which the Earl and his men had passed on the evening previous when they first started out in the search.

As Jenny was leading them through the long, narrow passage, Kathryn said:

"It is her husband, my Lord, who brought me hither; he is captain of the brig."

"Poor woman! It will go hard with him if he is taken," he said. On reaching the foot of the stair, Jenny said:

"Take this flight of steps, my Lord; it will take you to a long corridor, which will lead you to the rooms in the front of the building."

"Thank you, good Jenny; but will not you go with us?"

"I thank you, my Lord; I must first see what has become of my husband. I fear he is in trouble, and may need me."

"Good woman, if you should find yourself in trouble, do not fail to come to me for assistance at any time."

"No," said Kathryn; "you have rendered me much kindness. I shall not forget you, Jenny."

"I thank you, my Lord—my sweet Lady," she said, as she turned to retrace her steps.

With earnest solicitude the Earl lent his assistance to Lady Kathryn, as they proceeded up the long stairway. There being no one by whom he could convey the intelligence that Kathryn had been found, they walked on to announce to them the happy fact by her appearance among her friends. The doors and windows which had been thrown open in the search and left to flap and clatter in the wind now admitted a charming morning twilight, all rosy and bright. As they slowly wended their way, he said:

"And now, darling, you will be my bride?"

"Yes, my Lord, if—oh!—if you have not asked the Baroness——"

"Darling," he said, kissing her, "no, I have not seen the Baroness; neither wished to see her. Can you forgive me for resorting to a stratagem in order to win you over through jealousy? I could never think of wedding another while you live on this earth. But I could not understand your silence on yesterday morning when——"

"My Lord, I was forced to strain every nerve to refrain from shrieking out; the pain at my heart was so great the blood seemed frozen in my veins; I was incapable of speech."

"Sweet one, can you ever forgive me for causing you such exquisite pain? I will atone by a life of de-

votion. But how happened it you did not sooner learn that promise had been annulled?"

"My sweet Lord, I always tried to hide my love for you, especially from my mother. I felt guilty in suffering myself to love you under the circumstances, which you do not yet know and which I could not force myself to explain to you; for you know I twice swooned when urged by you to say why I could not give you my love. I could never speak the cruel words that would wound you so deeply. I loved you, my Lord, from the very first; but this promise, like a grim spectre, always hung between us, robbing me, as it were, of my very life. But here we are at the door. I must hasten to my poor mother. I will make it all up to you, my sweet Lord, by a life of pure love and devotion."

He kissed her lips as they entered that door through which on the evening before she and Flora had passed so joyously to explore the ruins.



CHAPTER XLVI.

A DENOUEMENT.—DEATH OF DONALD DHU.

"It comes—it wrings me in my parting hour,
The long-hid crime—the well-disguised guilt.
Bring me some Holy priest to lay the spectre."

DOCTOR GODKINS walked the floor in the great hall, conversing with Guy, who still occupied the sofa, while Annie sat beside him. Turning in his walk, with a hasty stride, he found himself face to face with the Earl and Kathryn, who had just emerged from the corridor and stood in the door of her room.

"Well, bless my soul! Here is the Earl; with Lady Kathryn looking as lovely and happy as a May morning, well and unharmed, after all our anxiety," he said, as he advanced to meet them.

With a little shriek, Annie rose and clasped Kathryn in her arms. Guy, still reclining, extended his hand to Kathryn, who exclaimed:

"Oh, my friend, what is this? Have you been hurt in searching for me? My Lord, you told me not of this!"

"No, my Lady, I did not. I was too deeply interested in another subject."

She ran into the drawing-room, among the women gathered there, and was received with acclamations of great joy mingled with shrieks of astonishment. Throughout the long night the Doctor, Lady de Bruce and Mrs. O'Neal had attended Lady Hawren, for she had gone from one swoon to another; but now, at the sound of Kathryn's glad voice, she woke to sensibility and rushed forth in dressing-gown and disheveled hair; her face, which had been like Oriental marble, now ablaze from excitement, she looked not unlike the pictures we see of Cordelia in her meeting with King Lear, and fell, almost swooning, from a reversion of feeling, into Kathryn's arms.

From unutterable anguish to supreme happiness, the change was life-giving. Turning to the Earl, who kept close to Kathryn's side, she cried:

"Oh, my dear Clifton, you have found my child, and have brought her to me!" She gave him a rapturous hug and kiss, and, with a mother's intuition, she at once realized the happy relation existing between them.

"Oh, how I wish I had found Lady Kathryn—to receive such reward!" said Doctor Godkins, aside, to Annie, as they stood in the doorway taking in the happy scene.

"I doubt it not," said Annie, with a happy smile.

"Yes, Lady Hawren," said the Earl, placing her in a deep chair; "I am most happy to restore your daughter safe and unharmed; and can now, if you will accept him, present you a son also—if these women

and girls ever get through with their hugging and kissing." And, taking Kathryn by the hand, he knelt with her before Lady Hawren, and continued: "Lady Kathryn has promised, with your consent and blessing, to become my wife."

"My Lord, I am highly gratified, and freely give you for your bride the heiress of Hawren. She shall not lack a superb dowry."

And, placing her hands on their heads, she bowed her face upon his manly shoulder and fervently asked the richest blessings of Heaven upon the happy pair; and, after she had kissed them, they rose, and happy congratulations filled the air.

"He, he, he!" Phyllis stood in the doorway of Lady Hawren's room, her arms folded across her breast, shaking with suppressed emotion.

"He, he, he! Dun foun' li'le baby, an' I 'spect gwine ter lose her 'gin terectly! He, he, he!" Kathryn untwined her arms from about Flora's neck and threw herself on the bosom of her faithful old nurse, saying:

"Oh, you dear old Mammy Phyllis! This is the happiest day I ever knew."

"Sho' 'nuf, Honey! I des' pray de good Lawd to bress you an' de noble Yearl, my Lawdship. He de nobles' man in dis wurl!"

"Now, indeed, I must tear myself away and seek my men, who may be in need of assistance," said the Earl.

But there was now heard a shuffling noise in the great-hall, as of rolling furniture, and Sandy and the butler rushed in, with terror-stricken faces, saying:

"Let us move out a couch for the wounded—another couch," and they hastily drew a great sofa into the center of the drawing-room. "Make preparation for attending the wounded!" Then Rorey and Macdonald appeared among them, with Edwin, all pale and bleeding, walking between them, supported by their arms.

They placed him on the sofa, while ringing footsteps were heard in the hall and several men appeared bearing the body of Lord Phantomfell, seriously wounded, and placed him on the lounge which had just been wheeled into the great-hall. And poor Andy M'Graw had been taken to the servants' hall, where he lay bleeding; badly gashed in more than one place.

Kathryn ran to Edwin. Sinking upon her knees and clasping her hands, she cried out:

"Oh, Cousin Edwin! Must you, too, suffer for my waywardness? Oh, I am so unfortunate to cause all of——" Edwin's face turned white, and he sank into unconsciousness. Kathryn, thinking him dead, sank back in a dead swoon. The Earl took her in his arms to her room and gently placed her on her bed; and leaving her in the care of Mrs. O'Neal, Marie and Phyllis, returned to Edwin. Flora had run into Lady Hawren's room, whence she heard Kathryn cry, and, looking forth, saw Edwin pale and deathlike, and fell fainting across Lady Hawren's bed. Mrs. Macleod and Lady de Bruce ran to her assistance. Numerous attendants thronged the hall.

Doctor Godkins gave attention, first to Edwin, whose injury he soon pronounced was caused from a lacerated flesh wound in the shoulder, saying that he had only yielded to a swoon from the loss of blood; and with the gentle aid of Lady Hawren, who could not be induced to leave his side and who bravely rendered all the assistance in her power, Edwin was soon rendered quite comfortable. Then the Doctor turned his attention to Lord Phantomfell, who, extended on a lounge in the great-hall, was giving utterance to some complaints and full-grown groans, and hurling invectives at Silas, old Sandy and the butler, who were doing all possible for him until the doctor could have liberty.

"Boys, you seem to be doing quite well with the

patient. Any bones broken, or is it just a flesh wound like the others?" asked the Doctor, as he bustled around.

"Oh, Doctor, my poo leg is shattered, I have no doubt. I feel assuwed amputation will have to be wesohted to; then I shall die! I cannot live and be foked to go through this woold on one leg. I am wuined, Doctor; wuined!"

"Oh, have patience, my Lord; we shall soon see to this matter."

After a short examination the Doctor pronounced His Lordship's wound not so very serious—only a flesh wound in the thigh, the ball ranging downward for several inches, grazing the bone all the way. It, too, was soon dressed, and just as all were beginning to feel relief there was heard a great tramping of feet from the old corridor.

* * * * *

The Earl, on the previous evening, on learning of Kathryn's abduction, had despatched a messenger to the Lord Lieutenant at Carlisle for a body of reserve militia, who, having been requested to take effectual steps for the suppression of the unlawful trade, so much practised at this time—for there had been for years contraband trade with France—had stationed militia at a number of points on the Solway, it having been noised about that very many of the common people along the coast were engaged in smuggling; and in many instances the gentry connived at them. Thus the officers of the revenue were often thrown off their duty by the citizens, who should have protected them, and thus there had recently been some contraband adventures.

It happened that Captain McNeil had been stationed, with his company of reserves on the Solway, between the old castle and Carlisle, and was now sent

immediately to the Earl's assistance. Arriving a little before good daylight, and meeting Lord de Bruce and Louis, with their men, near the ruins of the old church, he fell in with them in the search. Now Captain McNeil determined to search thoroughly the old subterraneous passages and basement of the ruinous old church edifice; and set out with much earnestness of purpose. Bursting through a door which had long been locked and overpiled with rubbish, they found themselves in a cavern where doubtless contraband trade had long been kept up. It was now piled high with illicit goods, and appeared to be a place where outlaws hoarded the stolen proceeds of their occupation. Now they heard a confusion of sounds in an adjoining compartment of the cavern, for there was a door standing slightly ajar, which opened into a rocky cave; and they could hear the roar of the sea outside and the dash of the waves upon the rocks. With a lusty flourish of trumpets, Captain McNeil and his men rushed onto a ship's crew who were engaged in depositing an illicit cargo. The flourish of trumpets roused the men to action. With deafening cries and the rattling and clashing of arms, the soldiers assail the smugglers, who are well equipped for a fight, but were surprised.

"Bows and bills! Bows and bills! Boys, onto them!" was the well-known shout of the Scots.

"Bows and bills! Bows and bills!" With hoarse cries they rush into the *mêlée*. A furious combat ensues—a hand-to-hand fight. There were sword-thrusts that called forth shrill cries of pain, yells and curses. Now the smugglers turn and flee, for their boats stand just outside the mouth of the cavern, to which there is no approach save by boats, and it was so overrun by bracken that it had never been noticed by any while in boats on the inlet. They left a number of killed and wounded, and while the others were pur-

suing the fleeing outlaws, Louis came upon a ruffian already bleeding from many wounds.

"Who is here? 'Thou art a thing of blood, whose every motion cried out for help!' " cried Louis, compassionately.

"Saint Hubert, man; 'tis only a sword-thrust. But I shall not outlive this."

"A dozen sword-thrusts, my poor man, you might say."

"I came here to warn my men away, but every way I turned I received a thrust. I am Donald Dhu, captain of yon smuggling craft, and have but one request to make of you. I wish to be carried to my sister, whom you may know—Mrs. Macleod."

"Know! Yes, Donald Dhu; and I have heard you named as one of Lord Graeme's followers, but never expected to find you engaged in this illicit business."

"Enough, enough, man; only take me to my sister. I cannot die without making a clean breast to her and asking her forgiveness; and there are others concerned—Lady de Bruce, and the Earl of Fleetwood, too. I must confess," he said, with a groan.

"I will do that for you, poor Donald Dhu, for they say the tongues of dying men enforce attention. Now the foe is vanquished, I will have you hastily transported to the hall of the old castle."

Now entered Lord de Bruce, Louis and Captain McNeil, followed by six of Hector's stout men bearing on a litter a person whom they deposited on a cot in the centre of the great hall. This person was large and stout. Blood flowed copiously from several ghastly wounds. His face was not evil, but expressed a mixture of kindness and ferocity.

The Doctor approached, with instrument and bandages in readiness for the work which lay before him.

"Who have you here, Louis?" asked the Earl, who had anxiously met them as they emerged from the old

corridor, and gave Hector a kindly handclasp, with a warm welcome.

"It is the smuggler's Captain; all gashed and gored," returned Louis; "commander of an armed vessel, without commission or letters de marque. He is wishing to have speech of Mrs. Macleod, who is his sister, your Lordship, and Lady de Bruce, also, having somewhat of a confession to make, he says. We came upon him with a band of smugglers in a dungeon, or perhaps a prison for ecclesiastic offenders, under the ruins of the old church. And this young Captain McNeil flew after them, sir, as a falcon upon a heron; and the heavens and his fair handling have made him master of the field this day. We have fairly routed them, my Lord; and at his own request bring you their Captain."

The Earl again pressed Hector's hand, with much sadness depicted on his face, for his was such a gentle nature, and tender, that the idea of bloodshed or slaughter disturbed him greatly. Now he approached Donald Dhu, who he had sometimes seen with Gaston's retinue, and said:

"Donald Dhu, is it indeed yourself I see, and so badly wounded?"

"Aye, aye, my Lord; I have met my fate, I have run my race; but must see Mrs. Macleod."

The Doctor stood ready to serve him. Motioning him away, he said:

"No, Doctor, you can do me no good now; I am done for!"

Mrs. Macleod, on hearing her own name and Donald's voice, came hastily from Flora's side, where she had been attending her, and dropped on her knees, crying:

"Oh, Donald, has it come to this at last? I have feared it for so long; oh, poor misguided one!"

Kathryn and Flora now came to the door of Kath-

ryn's room, and Flora, taking in the scene, ran to her mother's side, crying:

"Oh, Uncle Donald, you, too, have been hurt?"

"Yes, little Flora; have received my death stroke. But before I go I must right a great wrong."

"Oh, you will not die—oh, Doctor, come and save him!" she cried in great distress.

"He cannot live, Flora; his wounds are mortal. Not the least hope can be offered, child," the Doctor returned softly.

The Earl, seeing Flora almost swooning, supported her to a sofa near the door where Kathryn stood, and sat beside her; and, making room for Kathryn, she sat beside him also. All was now still as death.

Donald Dhu began to speak to his sister, who was bowed down by his side: "Martha, I have wronged you and kept you deceived for years, and now my time on earth is short. I must at least make reparation for the wrong done you. You know I made you believe you killed your husband; you did not do it——"

"Oh," she moaned, "this is some relief!"

"No; when you sprang on him to save your child—your little Flora—he dashed you off, and you fell fainting on the floor. I thought he had killed you, and picked up the poker and struck him across the back of the neck; he fell forward—dead—upon the child. Pulling him off, I found the life was crushed out of the poor little Flora—she, too, was dead——"

"Flora, my Flora? No; she's here!" exclaimed the terrified woman.

"No, sister, I told you a falsehood then; I am facing death now, I tell truth. I must correct the falsehood. My Lord," he said to the Earl, "please have someone take down my statements; they are of importance to more than one. You have here, I see, witnesses enough. I wish to give you a true statement of a bad affair."

The Earl, who had his hands full enough with Kathryn and Flora, both at the point of swooning, asked:

"Guy, will it be possible for you, in your crippled condition, to render me this service?"

"Aye, my Lord; I still have my brave right arm for use. Fetch a stand, Louis, and materials."

"Put the statement, Guy, in a legal form; such as will constitute it legal evidence," said the Earl, as a small table was drawn up beside Mr. Brignol and he was furnished with pen, ink and paper. Donald continued:

"Your Flora, sister, was crushed to death in the fall of her father."

Lady Hawren, who had left Edwin for a moment and stood in the door beside Kathryn and the Earl, now glided softly back to him, and, taking her seat beside him, took one of his hands in hers. They could distinctly see and hear all that was done in the hall. Mrs. Macleod, weeping, asked:

"Who, then, is this—my Flora?" Flora lay almost unconscious in the Earl's arms. Donald Dhu asked:

"Is Lady de Bruce present?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed that lady, springing up and going to him, for she had recognized in him the heavily armed man whom she had met on the beach on the day following the Fête Champetre.

"You don't know me, Lady, but I know you. I was with the wretch who stole your babe."

"Tell me; oh, tell me!" she cried. "Tell me ere it is too late what became of my little Marjorie."

"My Lord of Fleetwood, bring Flora hither," requested Donald Dhu.

The Earl rose, and, supporting Flora with his arm, led her up beside Lady de Bruce.

"Lady de Bruce, this is your child," said Donald.

Lady de Bruce shrieked and threw her arms around

Flora. At this, Mrs. Macleod fell back in a dead swoon. Mrs. O'Neal was instantly by her side.

"Louis, take her to her room, will you? This is too much for her," said the Earl tenderly. "Ambrose, assist Louis. Dear aunt, you will attend her?"

Louis and Ambrose placed Mrs. Macleod on her bed in an adjoining room.

"Flora," said Donald, "give Lady de Bruce the locket I gave you and asked you to keep about you always."

With trembling fingers Flora unclasped and drew forth the locket and placed it in the trembling hands of Lady de Bruce, who cried out on receiving and opening it:

"Yes, yes, my locket; with a miniature of myself at her age; with my initials, M. M.—Majorie Macdonald! My Lord de Bruce, only come and see!"

Lord de Bruce came, as one almost bereft of his senses, in such surprise was he. Looking at the locket, he cried:

"Oh, my darling child," as he folded Flora in his arms; "I have felt such an indescribable love for you, and have so wished that you could be my daughter!"

When Louis had carried Mrs. Macleod to her room, conducted by Mrs. O'Neal, Doctor Godkins had followed to administer to her comfort if she should need any medical attention or restorative. Louis and Ambrose, after depositing their burden, were not going to miss any of the interesting and important disclosure, so hastened back to the hall, leaving Mrs. Macleod, attended by Mrs. O'Neal and the Doctor, who had not been thrown together alone since the evening he had led her out from the dining-room.

"Let's get her into a better position, Mary. Will you kindly remove the pillow from under her head, while I raise her? There, now, that is better. And

please, Mary, just remove the brooch at her throat, that her respiration may not be retarded."

Mrs. O'Neal did as requested; then, dipping a towel in an ewer of water, wiped the poor woman's face gently and fanned her with a small fan. The Doctor felt in his pocket and drew forth a little pouncet, saying:

"Here, Mary, use this; you will find it a very fine restorative."

"Doctor! Oh, Doctor, please, if you can, come to Edwin!" cried Kathryn at the door.

"Well, well, dear; I will. She'll do very well, now, Mary, in your care. I feel that I must see what has happened to Captain Arranton."

"Yes, yes, Geor—g—e." She had not spoken his name before for years, and there was a little wail as she gasped it. It was so long since she had called him George. Her hand trembled visibly as she took the pouncet-box; his hand also trembled. He glanced into her face, but her eyes were on the box of diffusive stimulus. As he left the room, he said to himself:

"How excited all of us are over Lord and Lady de Bruce's happiness and little Flora's good fortune! I tremble yet, like an aspen; and, ye Gods! Mary trembled so that she could scarce take the box of smelling salts when I handed it to her." He stopped in the hall long enough to administer a stimulant to Donald Dhu, who was sinking rapidly, and went on to Edwin, thinking:

"What can be the matter with Edwin? I left him in good shape and resting well." Donald was still testifying:

"I did not take your child, Lady de Bruce; it was Robert Macleod who took her. But I accompanied him, and met you, Lady, even while he was taking the little one. We escaped to shipboard."

"But why, oh why, did you and your partner wish

to commit such a crime?" cried Lady de Bruce, clinging to Flora, who stood between her new-found parents, their arms around her.

"It was not evil within me, but the want of the accursed money. We were smuggling, and had been chased for weeks by His Majesty's ships, and were so near being captured we were forced to lighten our ship by throwing overboard all the cargo. Escaping them, we were forced to lie low for weeks. Reaching the Firth of Clyde, we felt secure, but needed money, and must have it. Robert thought there was a good opportunity to make a good haul straightway. He said he would take away the little child, then get the reward that would be offered. We knew Lord de Bruce was wealthy, and expected to make a big sweep. But after we had got the child, Macleod became terribly frightened lest we should be caught, and determined to go by Hawrenden and get his wife and child—my sister in there and her little Flora—and go to a place where we often stopped, in the West Indies. We went ashore at Hawrenden, leaving the infant in the ship, but Martha was determined not to go, for she had just discovered that we were smuggling, and outlaws to the country. Martha was always an honest, straightforward woman, and could not abide anything of the kind. In order to force her to go, Robert snatched the child, saying he would take it anyhow. She sprang upon him to get the child. As he shoved her off, she fainted, and I, thinking he had killed my sister, took up a rod of iron and laid him low. He fell on the child. I discovered that my sister was not dead, but in a swoon, but there was the dead man and child. Fearful of being discovered, I dragged them to the boat's side. It was just growing dark, and the boat was standing there ready to bear my sister away to the vessel. I lashed the bodies together and weighted them heavily, and was soon on the sea. Half-

way to the ship I rolled them into the waves. I went on board and took the little one we had left there and carried it to my sister, who I found in a fever and raving wild with delirium. Now the thought came to me that I could substitute the little one for her Flora, and she would never know the difference. I dressed the child in some of little Flora's clothing, which I found readily enough, and both being fair, with blue eyes, the difference would scarce be noticed. I placed the sweet little Majorie on the bed with my sister, taking the locket from her neck and the last vestige of her clothing with me. I ran to Granny Murdock's cabin, near, and told her that my sister was quite ill and she must go and take care of her ; then sped to my boat and put out to sea, and never again returned to the coast of Ayrshire. After a number of years I discovered my sister was living with Lady Margaret at Fleetwood, and managed to slip in to see her. I brought the locket with me, and, being afraid to keep it or to dispose of it for money, I gave it to little Flora, as she was now called, for my poor sister had never suspected that she was not her own little Flora. I bade her wear it, always concealed, for I feared being caught. I knew it was hers in right, and I felt that by it she might in some way be restored ; and when I met you, Lady de Bruce, day before yesterday, walking in the grove, I resolved it should be so—that the weight of guilt should be removed from my soul in some way ; but little dreamed in what way it would be done. In my first visit to Fleetwood I fell in with Gaston—Lord Graeme—in whose employ I have been since.”

Lord and Lady de Bruce, with Flora, hearing Mrs. Macleod's voice, went to her.

“Donald,” asked the Earl, “where is Gaston?”

“My Lord, I cannot just say. I see that you have recovered the young lady who he was so determined

on taking away; and sorry am I that I should have ever assisted him in his villainy. We came in just before day to carry her to the vessel. He went in, leaving myself and two other stout men outside the door to help if he should want our assistance. When we discovered your Lordship and your men coming down the steps which we had every reason to believe you would never find, we fled, and were soon overtaken and outstripped by him. He was fleet of foot, and badly frightened. He had never before ventured in with us where there was danger. He was now in the lead. We dashed through a door in the farther side of the great vault, which we hurled shut after us. It was soon burst in, and we were closely followed, but we gained on them a little, for they found themselves in a long tunnel, totally dark save for a faint light from the exit at the farther end, leading from the vault to the basement under the old church. At the exit there were two ways, one turning under the old church, the other but an orifice under a great rock that opened on the beach, where the boat had been left. I turned into the cavern under the old church to notify my men, who were there depositing a cargo, for we were making ready to be off. Gaston and the other two fled to the boat, hotly pursued by your men, my Lord, and I stopped long enough to observe through the bracken that the three turned and fired on your men just as they emerged from the tunnel. This gave them time to gain their boats, which they did under a perfect hail of bullets, and I cannot say whether they were hurt, for I darted on. But I am sure, from the exclamations I heard, that some of your Lordship's men were struck.

"Tell me, truly, Donald, is he engaged in this lawless business?"

"My Lord, he owns the brig of which I am Captain. My men and I do the work; my Lord Gaston

receives the money, but pays us well. He has long been engaged in this contraband trade with France. It is his money, my Lord, that has led me on from sin to sin."

"I have long feared that Gaston's business was not legitimate, but my own duties and interests have kept me away from home so much I have had no opportunity of discovering what he was really doing. Poor, misguided boy! He will doubtless be taken, and then——" The Earl groaned.

Poor Edwin was so situated on a sofa in the centre of the drawing-room that he could see and hear all that was taking place in the great-hall. When Donald Dhu had asked for Lady de Bruce and Flora, he, with excruciating pain, raised himself on one elbow and listened attentively to all. He had seen Flora run to the man and heard her gentle voice calling him Uncle Donald, at which he became greatly agitated. His aunt, who sat by him and held his hand, noticing his emotion, fanned him more vigorously. And when the Earl assisted Flora to the side of Lady de Bruce he heard what was said, and saw the locket examined. His excitement became intense. Lady Hawren exerted herself to quiet him, but when Lord de Bruce took Flora in his arms and called her his darling child, he, with a deep groan, sank into a swoon. It was at this time Kathryn had run for the Doctor, who came immediately to him, while Donald Dhu went on with his story. With intense feelings, Edwin had taken in all that transpired. The distressful circumstances surrounding him were, by this revelation, made even more difficult. He had given Flora all his young love, but had felt it impossible to offer his hand to her—of such humble parentage—while his was a lineage of purest aristocracy; and even when he had resolved to break over this impediment and offer her his hand, a vision of the smuggler had forced him to de-

sist. But, after his talk with the Earl that morning, he had made a decision, and was on the point of offering her his hand and his noble name; one minute more and she would now be his promised bride. But fate had snatched her from him; they had been interrupted. He had not finished his sentence. She had not promised. They were not affianced; and now she is the daughter of one of the wealthiest nobles of Scotland—Lady Marjorie de Bruce. And what was he? A young man with a pedigree and a Captain's commission—nothing more. Now he could never ask her to become his bride. His pride had stood between him and happiness. "Now 'twas too late; too late!" his heart cried. His head swam 'round; he was dazed; he fell back insensible upon his aunt's arm. After Edwin was once more restored to consciousness, Kathryn went and stood in the door of her room, looking upon Flora as she lay in the arms of her newly-found parents. Seeing a figure standing in the corridor leading from the ruins, she recognized Jenny. The poor girl stood weeping. Kathryn went across the hall to her and cried:

"Oh, Jenny; it is your husband, is it not?"

"Yes, my Lady; and he is killed! Oh, yes; he is killed!"

"Oh, poor Jenny! He is not yet dead, but must die, the Doctor says." And the sympathetic Kathryn put her arm around Jenny, who wept on her shoulder. She then led her up to the side of Donald Dhu, where she sank to her knees sobbing.

"Oh, poor Jenny-girl! What will become of you when Donald's gone?" asked Donald anxiously.

"Let not that thought distress you," said the Earl. "I will see that your wife is cared for, Donald. She stood faithfully by Lady Hawren's daughter in her hour of peril, and possibly has been the means of saving her to us altogether."

"Oh, yes!" said Kathryn, gently, who stood by her. "She was my friend in time of great need; I shall never forget her kindness."

"Jenny is a kind-hearted creature, there is no mistake; and, my Lord, I wish to make a full confession: Gaston—Lord Graeme—has greatly wronged you. I must not forget to explain away the infamy laid to your Lordship; and I, for his accursed money, bore false witness against you. My voice grows weaker. Bring Lady Hawren near that she may hear what I wish to say."

Flora now came from the room where Lord and Lady de Bruce, with Mrs. O'Neal, were trying to offer consolation to poor Mrs. Macleod. She flew into Kathryn's arms. Then, seeing Lady Hawren rise from Edwin's side to offer her congratulations, she ran to her. Lady Hawren received her in her arms and kissed her peach-bloom cheeks.

"Oh, Lady Hawren! I have a father and another mother!" cried the happy child; so unsophisticated, she never once thought of the honor or wealth and station heaped upon her.

Just at that moment Lady Hawren, being called to the side of the dying man to hear that portion of his confession relating to the Earl, stood a moment irresolute, hesitating to leave Edwin. Flora, gently relieving her of the fan, said:

"Allow me, Lady Hawren; I will attend him in your absence."

And while Lady Hawren was being seated beside the Earl, Flora glided softly to Edwin's side and, kneeling on a cushion beside his couch, placed her delicate hand upon his brow, and smoothing back the long, glossy ringlets, said:

"Oh, Captain Arranton, have you heard what has been said? And do you know that I am Marjorie de Bruce, the long-lost daughter of Lord and Lady de

Bruce? And now I have two good mothers, instead of one, and such a noble father!" Her little trembling hand soothed his brow and cheek caressingly, and as he choked up and found utterance impossible, she continued: "And, oh, I am so sorry you have been wounded!" And she looked inquiringly into his eyes. Then Edwin found his voice, and said:

"Thank you, Dearest; yes, I have heard it all, and must congratulate you on finding your parents."

"Oh, Edwin!" she said softly, a wild terror striking her heart from his manner, "and will you love me any the less for the change?"

"Nothing, nothing can ever alter my feelings for you, dear Flora. My love for you is boundless as yonder ocean; but, oh—o—o——"

"What is it? Oh, Edwin, are you feeling worse? What is hurting you—your wound? Does it pain you?"

Edwin groaned inwardly, feeling that he could not mar her new-found happiness. He could not say what he felt; that there was now a greater disparity than ever between their positions, which would utterly forbid his offering her his hand. She fanned him gently and tried to soothe him, for she supposed he was suffering from his wound.

The Earl and Lady Hawren were seated near the wounded outlaw. Doctor Godkins was restlessly pacing the floor, thinking, perhaps, how his hand and Mary's had trembled when he had reached her the pouncet; and wondering why she had not permitted him to look into the depths of her eyes. He was manifesting much interest in Mrs. Macleod's condition, surely, for each time he passed the door he would glance in to see Mary seated at the head of the bed waving gently the little bunch of feathers, her cheeks glowing with beauty, while Lord and Lady de Bruce sat beside Mrs. Macleod, offering all man-

ner of consolation; and he actually would have been glad had the poor woman swooned again, that he might have an excuse to go to her relief and once again assist Mary in attending her.

Kathryn had stationed herself just inside her own room, that she might hear what was said; the others were in groups, with Annie and Guy, and with Lord Phantomfell, who lay prostrate on a lounge near the front door of the great hall.

"My Lord," continued Donald Dhu, "Gaston has long been your worst enemy; and when you left Fleetwood for Weirwolf he immediately set about putting your grandfather against you, that he might supplant you in his affections. And after you had started on your journey your grandfather walked out, as usual, at close of day to enjoy his evening walk. Gaston feigned an attack on him, wishing to make it appear that you had returned to assassinate the noble old Earl. Gaston exchanged his clothing for some of yours you had left behind, and rushed upon him in the dusk of evening, with your own jeweled dagger; pounced upon him, throwing him down and cutting his clothing badly. When the Earl cried out for help, I, being stationed nearby, ran to his assistance; and as the assassin fled I pursued him. Throwing off the old clothes, Gaston picked up his fowling-piece and ran to his grandfather's assistance, apparently much excited. We took the noble old gentleman up and carried him to his room. He was greatly agitated, and we had no trouble proving to him that Your Lordship had attempted to assassinate him before leaving the neighborhood. Gaston well knew that if you were ever admitted to his presence that you would have no trouble proving clear; so he made His Lordship believe that if ever you had opportunity you would kill him. And I stood in with him, my Lord, to blacken your good name for the love of money.

The love of money has been my ruin." Donald paused for a moment. The Earl was dazed, and in astonishment raised his eyes to Kathryn's face as she stood inside her room, where she had heard all, her cheeks aglow with intense satisfaction. And while Doctor Godkins administered a cordial to the dying man, he rose and softly passed to where she stood, and, drawing her aside from the door, he clasped her in his arms and, kissing her cheeks fondly, asked:

"Darling, how could you love such a monster as you were made to believe me?"

"My Lord, I did never believe it; and now I *know* 'twas all false!"

"Oh, darling, how I thank you for your confidence!" He reluctantly left her and returned to Donald Dhu.

"My Lord," asked Donald anxiously, "can you forgive me—a poor, misguided wretch—for taking part in all this wickedness against you?"

"Freely, Donald; freely! Poor man, you have been under the influence of a most wicked one!"

"And your deadly foe, my Lord. Three times with his own hand he has attempted to take your life and rob you of your cousin. And last year, at the hunt you had at Esk, three men were kept thereabout, to take your life, while the Italian and I were to ride away with the young lady to the Old Hermitage, where he was then staying. He usually kept himself away from dangerous places, but on the last day himself it was who shot you in the shoulder, only a stumble of his horse saved your life. He has carried a remembrance, himself, of that day, in a great scar on his cheek, laid on by some heavy hand, and came near losing his life, too, by the same. He paid us handsomely, and made many promises as to what he would do when he became Earl of Fleetwood. When I first came to him, all broken up and without means, he bought a ship and put me in charge of it, and we have

run a successful business ever since. He won me to him at first by his kindness to me in need ; and when he revealed to me his nefarious schemes I was too deeply engrossed to back down ; and he promised so much. Now my race is run ; I have cheated the halter, and after making reparation for the wrong I have done by confessing all, I wish to die like a man. But for the love of money I could have been a decent man. I was easily led to do wrong. My sister is a good woman, and I have wronged her extorting money from her by making her believe she had killed her husband. My Lord, the only request I have to make is that you permit some of your men to take my body far out to sea and bury it beneath the waves, as I did Macleod and little Flora."

The Earl promised this should be done. And now Lord and Lady de Bruce assisted Mrs. Macleod to rise, and led her to her brother's side, where she freely forgave him all, and took a last, long farewell of him. Lady Hawren and Kathryn returned to Edwin and Flora, where they found Miss Augusta and Rosa with their new-found cousin. At the request of the Earl, Reverend Duward Hayston made his way to the side of the dying man, saying as he went :

"If his soul is not past all aid, I will endeavor to offer him some consolation ; and happy is he if prepared to meet the summons."

About one hour after he was brought in, Donald Dhu breathed his last. His body was removed to a great vacant hall amid the ruins, to be prepared for sea burial. The mourners were Mrs. Macleod, Jenny and her grandmother, with whom she had lived in the fishers' village near, and the same who had acted as gypsy fortune-teller at the fête. And toward evening the body of Donald Dhu was deposited in the waves ; also the bodies of those slain in the mêlée. The wounded received good attention, and were made com-

fortable in the cavern under the ruins of the old church.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when Donald's body was removed from the great-hall. The different scenes brought before the reader were enacted with greater rapidity than they could be written, several simultaneously. There had been little or no sleeping during the night; dinner, on the previous evening, had not been eaten; nor had breakfast yet been served. As soon as those who felt disposed now partook of food, all retired to rest, save Lady Hawren, who for some time remained by Edwin's side. Soon Edwin, rousing as from a troubled dream, said:

"Oh, my dear aunt, this revelation has put an end to all my hopes of ever calling her my own!"

"Why, Edwin, I supposed—— Are you not already affianced, in spite of all I have advised to the contrary? Are you not an accepted lover?"

"True, aunt, I have declared my love repeatedly, but never have offered her my hand. Not that I had not determined to do so, but each time, being overcome by her gentle loveliness, I would have asked her to be mine, the horrid vision of a villainous smuggler captain, sea robber, an outlaw, vulgar and coarse, would rise up before me and curdle the blood in my veins; so much so, that I could not speak. And shall I now, that all this has been removed and she is discovered to be of blood as noble as my own, besides heiress to one of the noblest fortunes in Scotland; may I, a poor boy with only a captain's pay and a pedigree, throw myself at her feet and thus, taking advantage of her love, win her fortune also and subject myself to just criticism? The Earl knows—I told him in a talk we had this morning before daylight—that I could never wed one of such low parentage——"

"Oh, Edwin!"

"Yet, after my talk with him I had determined, in

spite of your kindly admonitions, to forget all and ask her to become my wife; and went to her with that intention, and had even begun the sentence that would have bound me to her—for she loves me and has given me every reason to believe that I would have been accepted—but we were interrupted just at that moment, and I was hurried away, leaving it unsettled; and I am now miserable and undone.”

“Oh, Edwin! And I am the innocent cause! Oh, the ignorant cause, I may say; for ignorance is the cause of almost all the sorrows known to humanity! I am the cause of your distress and anguish. Now, oh, how I regret having interrupted or meddled in your love affair! But the way we understood the situation I felt it to be my duty—and——” She faltered, then broke down and wept.

“No, no, dearest aunt; do not weep. It was your duty to warn me. I love you, and appreciate your solicitude for my welfare. I was, indeed, too rash. No young man should suffer himself to fall blindly in love with one of whose family he knows nothing. In my cool moments I know it would have been horrible for me to marry her had all been just as you believed it to be. Think, dearest aunt, of the weight that poor woman has carried on her heart all these years, believing she had murdered her husband. How cruelly must she have suffered! Lady de Bruce has suffered; the sorrow for the loss of her child is depicted in her sad face; and must I go free? Am I better than they—those noble-hearted women? No! I will bravely submit to my own sorrow. But, oh, poor Flora! If she loves as do I—must I bring bitterness to her in her new-found happiness?” And Edwin and Lady Hawren mingled their tears.

The apartment which had been assigned Lord de Bruce was large and pleasant, with door and windows opening to the east on a fine old veranda, being one

of the original rooms and first on the right of the entrance. This he kindly offered to give up to the wounded—Lord Phantomfell and Edwin—rather than have them taken upstairs to their respective apartments, saying he could easily share his wife's bedroom. Therefore, late in the evening Lord Phantomfell was placed upon Lord de Bruce's bed, and a sumptuous couch was made comfortable for Edwin in the same large room, that they might be company for each other and where they could be more conveniently cared for. Edwin's couch was placed near a fine window, where he could look out on the moonlit scene. He was able, with great care, to move from place to place, but Lord Phantomfell was forced to refrain from all locomotion. And here, for two days more, they occupied nearly all the attention of the ladies, who hovered solicitously over them, anticipating every wish; while Doctor Godkins, pacing from one to the other of his patients—not forgetting poor Andy, who was doing well enough—cheered all by his quaint sayings and rich anecdotal traditions. Guy was almost overlooked, save by Annie, his wound giving so little trouble.



CHAPTER XLVII.

LAST DAYS 'AT OLD CASTLE.

"One glad hour can hold
Enough of joy to brighten years of gloom."

NEXT morning the servants were hurrying about, making some preparation for departure from the old castle, where so much pleasure and much suffering had been experienced; for the Doctor had said his patients would be able in two days to be moved.

Flora passed her time equally between Mrs. MacLeod and Lady de Bruce, who said: "I fear she will never regard me as her mother, having been blessed with such a good one."

Lord Phantomfell was saying to Miss Augusta, who kindly sat near, waving over him her dainty fan:

"Poor wretch! He is the vewy one that shot me, I much believe. I should ha' died had I lost my leg; foah I could nevah go thwo this woold on one leg, Miss Augustah."

"Oh!" returned she, "you should be very thankful, my Lord, that you lost not both of them." And she beamed kindly on him and fanned him with her little fan. Lady Hawren was busily caring for Edwin.

And while most of the ladies had gathered around his patients, Doctor Godkins walked in the hall, where Annie sat with Guy. Now and then, in passing the drawing-room door, he would cast in a wistful glance. Annie approached and asked, as she glanced in and saw Lady Hawren giving her attention to Edwin:

"Well, Doctor, what think you of the collected Lady Hawren? She would undoubtedly make a fine wife for a physician. She would, indeed, be a helpmate."

"Think you so, Miss Hamilton? She possibly would; she has good nerve, and his eyes again rested on some object in the drawing-room, for he had paused where he had a good view of this object. Then he said distinctly: "Now, there's Mary, would make a fine helpmate for a physician; she has nerve!" Mrs. O'Neal sat alone with her embroidery, near a window in the farther end of the drawing-room, her soft hair arranged most becomingly, and she looked as pleasant as a May-morning, and

heard, as he intended she should, all he said.

"How is it you call Mrs. O'Neal so familiarly by her name?" asked Annie.

"Oh, we were boys and girls together!"

"Ho! ho! ho! Boys and girls, were you? How many boys were you, Doctor?"

"Oh, a whole team," he returned, his eyes still fixed on Mrs. O'Neal. He had for days observed her every action and every expression of her face.

"And pray, how many girls was she?" Annie asked, a little curiously.

"Oh, a dozen; just a round dozen!—that is, she was worth that number of any others I ever saw." How he studied her face as he spoke. Her eyes were fastened on her embroidery, her cheeks, from a delicate hue, became rosy, then red. A smile lurked about her rounded coral-red lips, for with one swift glance she perceived he was watching her. She bit her under lip to repress the smile, and now, the row of pearly teeth gleaming on the vermillion lip, presented a combination absolutely irresistible; so thought the Doctor, as with a new light kindling his expressive eye, he offered Annie his arm, for a promenade promenade up and down the old corridar.

They passed by where Guy lay gently dozing on his sofa.

"Doctor, I do believe you are trying to diagnose a case," she said archly, as they walked on. "You seem to be studying our friend."

"You are a close observer, Miss Hamilton. I admit I have a case which I am studying intently; and am about to arrive at a conclusion."

"And that is——?"

"Ah! Miss Hamilton; as much as I esteem you, I shall never tell you that."

"Are the indications favorable?"

"I must admit you to be an astute observer, and

will promise you thus far, if results prove favorable, I will tell you; not otherwise."

"Then Doctor; I shall expect soon to become your confidante."

"Oh, do not feel too sure about it; but now I must ask you to excuse me," as he led her back, and gave her a seat near Guy, who was just opening his eyes. "I must make a visit to each of my patients, however much I may desire to remain in your fascinating company."

* * * * *

Miss Augusta, Rosa and Nora stand on the flagstones of the old hall in the ruins, gazing out over the sea. The purpling sun is sinking down, his golden beams flash far over the adjacent hilltops, and over the inlet, where are a number of fairy-like boats. Annie is taking Guy for a last visit to the little fairy isle; Lord and Lady de Bruce, with Flora, follow in their wake.

"Let us also take a boat for the little fairy isle for the last time," cried Rosa, as she began to clamber down, among the rocks and vines, an almost precipitous descent, in order to avoid going the usual route, so far around to reach the beach, which lay gleaming beneath them. Nora started to follow, but Miss Augusta shrank back, saying:

"I declare, girls; I can never follow you two venturesome creatures; you will go just anywhere!"

"Oh, come Gusta! I will row you over to the isle, as Lord Phantomfell is laid up, and cannot accompany you."

"As tho' I cared for Lord Phantomfell!" exclaimed Augusta, testily. Rosa returned to Augusta's side, and said:

"Come on! Take hold here, Nora; we'll take her down! And Rosa seizing her by one arm, and

Nora by the other, they began to scramble thro' the interlacing vines, and over loose stones from the old wall; and Rosa took time to say:

"Oh, but we know; don't we, Nora? You were quite attentive to him all morning, sitting by his side and waving your fan——"

Miss Augusta, highly indignant, wrenched herself from the grasp of the merry girls, who, on being thus suddenly relieved of her weight and unable to check the augmented momentum thus received, rushed madly on, soon reaching the shining sands below. Then hearing a crushing noise in their wake, on looking back, they saw Miss Bruneau, who had, on withdrawing herself from their support, sat down rather heavily and unexpectedly; then losing her equilibrium, and being impelled by the impetus of her own weight, now came rolling after them in a most undignified manner. Whereupon, two manly figures sprang forward to render her assistance.

"Ah, acushla!" exclaimed the Major, turning to the girls, while placing Miss Bruneau upon her feet. "If ever I saw two young ladies run with such rapidity down a steep declivity! I thought 'twas angels coming from above. Sure, jewels, you are good runners, both; but Miss Bruneau, it appears, prefers a different mode of locomotion.

The two girls, overcome with mirth, sat them upon a fallen tree, whence the two men had just arisen, while Major O'Connor and Captain McNeil gave Miss Bruneau an examination, to satisfy her there were no bones broken.

"Oh, Major O'Connor, we were going for a last boat ride, to the little Fairy Isle, and thinking we would come the nearest way, came straight down from the ruins!" explained Nora.

"Ah, Jewel, it brings roses to your cheeks, but you might have been the death of Miss Augusta."

"A precipitous route you found it, I should say, Miss Rosa," said Hector; "suppose you had fallen and rolled into the sea?"

"We would have made a great splash; ha, ha, ha!" she returned; and her light laugh, like the silvery dance of a cascade, floated softly over the sea. After assuring Miss Augusta there were no broken bones, they went on to the boat landing. Major O'Connor took Miss Augusta and Nora, and rowed away. An attendant brought forth Rosa's light craft.

As they step in, the light boat rocks on the deep-blue waves; she lifts her oar, but no! Hector, ere she is aware of his intention, takes the light thing from her hand, and dipping it into the waves, they scud away over the sea.

"Why do you take my oar?" she asked.

"It is my privilege, Miss Rosa, to do the rowing. It is not mete that you should do the rowing for me," he said softly, but with so much firmness and authority that she yielded gracefully, as she would have done to no other with less firmness. They reached the little isle as evening blushed on wave and bower; and after an hour gloriously spent in rambling over this gorgeous vine-clad spot, when the sun had calmly set and the wild birds had hushed their song and gone to rest, they repaired, each by a lover's side, to the old castle, where they were to spend the last evening in its charmingly romantic environments.

* * * * *

"Duncan Gray came here to woo—

Ha, ha! the wooing o't!

One blithe yule night when we were fou,

Ha, ha! the wooing o't!

Maggie cost her head fu' high,

Looked asklent and unco skeigh—

Ha, ha! the wooing o't!"

The moon, on this last night at the old castle, was a little late rising; but when at last the silver orb appeared, and began to flame thro' the long shafted windows, Louis and Rosa walked adown the old corridor for a promenade amid the ruins. On and on, at length reaching the great old open hall, the witches' stairway suggested to them a charming retreat. Here the roar of the ocean, from without, was heard; the flaming moon threw a flood of soft light over the ruinous turrets and battlements. He led her to the witches' stairway, which, like "the Nelumbo bud that floats forever," appears to be the cradle of Cupid, about which he still loves to lurk, and seated her amid the glory of the foliage, himself by her side; for now he hovered about her ever, being led on and on, like the bee about the purple-stemmed flower of Trebizond, feeding on its blossoms, becomes each day more and more intoxicated, drinking in its honeyed dew—deliriously sweet—torturing him to madness.

"Rosa," he said, "his voice of velvet softness, "I want you to tell me something——" Without giving him time to complete his sentence, she said:

"I will, my friend; I will tell you the story—or rather, will repeat to you some verses of irregular measure which I, in an imaginative mood have composed, on the Nereid of Colonsay——"

"Yes, but I was going to——"

"——Yet listen how this runs:

"From a coral cave a Nereid rose,
Her long sea-green curls, with seaweed twine——."

"Around her nose," put in Louis.

"Oh, no, indeed! You interrupt—twine—twine—oh, yes:

“‘Around her fair throat, and fall and mingle
With coral and pearl;
Oh, come with me—’”

“Let’s see—how is it?”

“My beautiful girl,” suggested Louis.

“No!—ah!—”

“To the sighing sea,

“‘To my lovely home, beneath the foam,
Come home with me!
In my grotto fine, where seaweeds twine,
Thou shalt have thy home.
Then come, love, come.’”

“I am here,” he said softly.

“Ha, ha, ha!

“‘I’ll bear thee hence to my emerald cave,
Come live with me beneath the wave;
I’ll dive with thee away.—’”

“I’d never risk that! Now, Rosa, listen; you are robbing me of my most valuable moments here, the last evening in this charming old place. Come, listen to me a while; I have words of much import to communicate to your ear, alone——”

“Oh, Master Louis; first let me tell you: My uncle has given me a fine hunting dog, a most interesting, sagacious and serviceable creature; his intelligence is great, his ears long and pendant——” Louis sighed, then said:

“Oh, that your heart might beat responsive to my own——”

“Ah! what was it you once said to me? Something exceedingly pretty, about the heart of a nightingale?”

“I will repeat it, if you will believe it,” he returned.

"My heart is as true to you as is the heart of the nightingale to its beloved rose. What is the richest spot, with every other flower, to the nightingale, if his darling rose is not there?"

"Ah! that is something more even than you erstwhile said; you improve with age," she declared.

"I mean it, every word, too!" Her face was radiant, yet she said carelessly:

"I have a fine name for my dog."

"Oh, you wicked——"

"I have named him for a hero."

"Allow me to suggest that you name him Hero."

"His name is Hector. I would rather name him for Hector, who was a hero, than for Hero, who was not a hero."

"You rather like Hector, anyway, I believe."

"Oh! Captain McNeil? Yes."

"Captain McNeil 'will be thinking' you named your dog for him," said Louis, mimicking Hector's brogue.

"And I 'will be telling' him that I did not. Though maybe I did."

"You are not sure that you did not?" he asked anxiously.

"This is almost, but not altogether, a porch entwined with sweet honeysuckle and jasmine," she said eagerly, scanning the lovely vines and flowers surrounding her, climbing and twining about the witches' stairway.

"I have asked your uncle's consent to offer you my hand, which he freely gave; now, I ask you to become my wife."

"You have gained my uncle's consent!"

"Yes, little sweetheart; he kindly permits me to offer you my heart and hand."

"And your love, Louis? Are you sure that you love me truly?"

"How can you doubt it, little sweetheart; you must have known it for the longest time."

"I am proud of your love, and of your kind offer," she said, her eyes beaming with satisfaction, "but Louis, how can you have the temerity to offer *me*—to ask *me* to become your wife——"

"It is my love that makes me bold enough to face an army with banners; to face a lion in his den; love makes the weakest strong——"

"You who have said: 'I would as soon take to my bosom a wasp or bumble bee, as that little spitfire, the hoydenish Amazon, the wild, elfish witch——'"

"There, there! little sweetheart; that—that was a joke."

"Then I must say that hereafter 'twere better not to crack a joke, than crack some puir boddie's head, too.'"

"Have they—have people repeated to you every word that I, in my thoughtlessness, have inadvertently said of you—that—that——" He paused in utter confusion, then continued: "And more perhaps than I ever thought of."

"There's no doubt you said many unpleasant things of me which have been repeated; I know not that I have heard all. You may have given utterance to other sentiments, and worse, maybe; I know not."

"I have said naught else against you, little sweetheart; but have since said many, very many sweet things of you to compensate for that wild outburst. You were so different from all others; and I did not know that a lady of such hoydenish manners could possess so much charming refinement and such a lovely character as I have since discovered in you. You hold for me a charm beyond that I have ever felt for any quiet or timid one I have ever known——"

"Why not say *modest*? You called me *bold*," she said, with flashing eye.

"Oh, I may have meant it in the sense of courageous, intrepid, contempt of danger—not a want of modesty—high-spirited; the word has various meanings. Your graces I at first looked upon as objectionable have since won my admiration—my love."

"Say not love, Louis; you may have learned to tolerate my boldness and other objectionable features; but do not say love, Louis." She would lead him on and force him to admit he loved her, that her triumph might be the greater.

"Little sweetheart, you will forgive the past, and let me love you to atone for my folly, for I assure you that since that time I have learned to love you most——"

"*'Learned!'*" she reiterated scornfully, "I want no man to *learn* to love *me*. I want the love of a man who, on first sight, is overwhelmed with the fierceness of his love irresistibly forced by a tender passion. I will not accept the love of a man who must *learn* to love me. His love must burst forth as a volcanic fire; he must be hurled into a resistless vortex, whence he cannot turn."

"Possibly you know such a one," said Louis, absolutely nonplussed.

"Indeed, then, I believe I *do*. I want no man two long years *learning* to love *me*, therefore, I must decline your love—I must decline your most generous offer to make me your wife, however much I may thank you for the kindness prompting you. I will never wed a man who must *learn* to love me. He must love me at first sight, because he cannot resist; not one who would make a sacrifice of himself because he thinks he has inadvertently won my

love." She eyed him askance to see how he would take this.

"Rosa, Rosa!" he cried in dismay.

"A wild, uncontrollable love—an outburst of pure sentiment for me!"

Louis thought she had never appeared to better advantage than in this moment of her premeditated triumph. He knew, now, why she had appeared to love him, and had given him so much encouragement.

"Then, little sweetheart, you utterly reject me," he said, with a look of wounded pride he could not conceal.

"Utterly, Louis; forgive me for refusing the honor of your hand. Come! 'Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet!'" Wondering at her perfect *sang froid* he replied, a little testily:

"Yes, I will forgive and quite forget you——"

"I am willing to forgive your slanders, and remit your other offenses——"

"'Oh, that I were a child, to play with toys,
Fix my whole soul upon a cup and ball'——"

he broke off, and walked to and fro. There was a prolonged, expressive silence. He sat down.

"Rosa, you are variable as the winds that blow over the ocean. No longer than last evening I would have sworn from your sweet, caressing manner that you loved me; and now——"

"It appears that young men of this day arrive at conclusions with the utmost promptness, without warrant for so doing. If a young lady but deigns to look upon one as a friend, or brother, he speedily comforts himself with the belief that she loves him."

"What do you think of me, Rosa, anyway?" he asked, admiring the delicious *naïvete* of manner that accompanied her remarks.

"I think, sir, that you are preposterously conceited; yet I do love you as a friend."

"May we not, then, be friends?"

"Louis, I *am* your friend."

"I will be your friend forever, Rosa. Will not you ever rely on me as such? And may I not still call you little sweetheart?"

"You, who have called me so many things, may call me whatever you like!" she returned, her eyes fairly speaking the happiness welling up in her heart at the thought that he would not break off and leave her, but still would call her little sweetheart, as before; for she did not realize the exultation she had anticipated in the supreme moment of her triumph. There was something tugging at her heart, and she sighed as she continued: "At least, until you shall find another whom you may call so."

Louis was unhappy; he knew not why, unless he really loved her more than he had thought. He knew now that for sweet revenge she had led him on to this termination. And she felt that in trying to win his love for pure revenge she was at the point of losing her own heart; but resisted the sweet influence. She had made him own that he loved her; that was a comfort. She was triumphant, yet thought there was no reason why she should not marry Louis and be happy. He heaved a sigh on pressing her hand to his lips; yet his heart throbbed with relief, for he did not love her as he felt he could love, and, as she had said, had been a long time learning to love her thus much.

"Hope is worth all the escaped spirits that I still have left me," he said. And they rose and walked to the verge of the crumbling ruin.

"How the little froggies do croak, and with what agility they hop into the pools below!" she said carelessly, while her heart throbbed tumultuously.

And they returned to the drawing-room, under a bond of friendship.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

REUNITED.—THE PARTING.

"Oh, no—not even when first we loved
Wert thou so dear as now thou art!
Thy beauty then my senses moved,
But now thy virtues bind my heart."

"Withdraw not yet those lips and fingers,
Whose touch to mine is rapture's spell.
Life's joys for us a moment lingers,
And death seems in that word—farewell!
The hour that bids us part and go,
It sounds not yet; oh, no, no, no!"

"Time whilst I gaze upon thy sweetness
Flies like a courser near the goal;
To-morrow where shall be his fleetness,
When thou are parted from my soul?
Our hearts shall beat, our tears shall flow,
But not together; oh, no, no, no!"

NEXT morning, while all the ladies were busily engaged giving directions and having their belongings packed for the return home, Doctor Godkins stood in the hall, after having visited all his patients, who protested they were quite able to make the trip. He stood meditating, when he caught a glimpse of Mrs. O'Neal, as she glided softly across the drawing-room and into the library. On the spur of the moment, he followed her. Drawing back the portiere, he saw her standing by the library table, gathering up her embroidery, which she had left lying there overnight. On seeing him, she was so startled that the work dropped at her feet.

"Oh, my timid one! So I have found you at last!" he cried, seizing her trembling hands, as she attempted to pass him and go outside. "And you would elude me, would you?"

"Oh, George; let me go!" she cried, all aglow.

"What! let you go, Mary? No! I've been trying too long to get you."

"Well—please let go my hands."

"Come, now, Mary, you know how you loved me when a little girl at school—my little fair-haired girl—and you know, Mary, you have always loved me——"

"Oh! You—how can you talk so——?"

"Oh! I mean I have always loved you, my fair-haired, gentle Mary. Now have I got it right?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

"No, no! There's Miss Annie. You like her——"

"Like Miss Annie? I do: she's fine, but fiery. She's too spunky for me; besides, Guy——"

"Oh, do let me go!"

"Never! You've got to look me in the eyes and tell me that you love me yet, Mary, as you did once long ago—don't you know?"

"Oh, please! I shall scream."

"Well, now, scream," he said, drawing his arm around her slender waist and holding her fast; "now scream, and they will all come running to see what is the matter, and I'll tell them that you've got me cornered up in here, making love to me. Now what do you think of that? Would not they be surprised? What would Lady Hawren say; and my Lord, the Earl?"

"Oh,—dear, dear!"

"Oh, that's it; that's it, Mary! Talk love to me; call me dear."

She buried her face in his bosom to hide her blushes. He pressed her to his heart, and said:

"Now look up, my Mary, and tell me, do you love me yet?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"I knew it, darling; you could not conceal it. You were not artful enough to hide it."

But Lady Hawren, what of her?" she asked.

"Oh, she's sweet, a goddess of beauty, but she could never take the place of one whom I have loved so long, Mary."

"Yes, I know," she said softly, looking up, and no longer struggling to release herself from his strong clasp. Their lips met in one fond caress, then he drew her to a window seat, and said:

"I have been alone so long, Mary."

"Yes, yes, George; and I am to blame for all——"

"No, no, darling; it was I—I can not let you go any more, Mary. Let us spend our days—the remainder of our days, side by side."

"Oh, yes! and make reparation for the past." He placed his arm about her and drew her close to his side, her head drooping on his shoulder, and he kissed her red lips.

"One hour of such glorious life, Mary, is worth many years of such as have fallen to my lot. My love for teasing you, Mary, has robbed me of much happiness."

"Oh, you shall not bear all the blame, George—where did you go?"

"To the Mediterranean with Sir George Rook's squadron, and was stationed at Gibraltar, as surgeon, vainly wishing to meet death, while trying to save others, never expecting to see you again, Mary. I wished to die. Then made a journey into Asia, disguised as a pilgrim, and would have been glad to die in that wild country, returning here two years ago and something more; and although I have lived here since, in the most intimate relation with

the old Earl, as long as he lived, and Lord Clifton, never heard one word of you, supposing that if you lived you were another man's wife. I never asked about you; came here expecting to spend my life in solitary bachelorhood; but you will deliver me, Mary, from such a fate?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" she said, her arms about his neck. "Had you known, George, would you not have come to Weirwolf to see me?"

"Had I known all I do now, I should; but I could not know that until I saw you, and not knowing, I should not have seen you."

"But chance at length has made amendment for her error——"

"Oh, yes, my own; one loving hour will compensate for many years of——"

Someone suddenly withdrew the portiere, the Earl looked in, drew back, and was retiring, when the Doctor called:

"Oh, come in, come in, my Lord; there's no one whom I so much wish to see! Come in and see a pair, the happiest of the happy!"

They rose, now, and standing, received the Earl's congratulations.

"On my soul, Doctor, you are a lucky scamp!"

"Lucky! that I am. Have been unlucky all my days; now luck has turned and I promise to be happy in the future."

"Darling aunt, you have captured the very best old doctor in the world. May bright-winged angels hover about you always, and may your union be crowned with the richest of blessings."

"With your permission, my Lord, we will wed soon, just as soon as the banns can be thrice announced."

"Aye, in three weeks, then; be it so," and the Earl

left them to themselves, to explain the past and plan for the future.

Lord Phantomfell had departed. Miss Rachel, his sister, on hearing of the engagement with the smugglers, and that Lord Finley of Phantomfell had received a severe wound, had sent straightway for him a number of men, with a litter to fetch him home, where she herself might attend him.

Now Edwin occupied the large room alone, and sat expectant, half reclining among the cushions of the sofa, where Lady Hawren had just left him. Flora entered timidly, with a feather fan in her hands, saying:

"Captain, Lady Hawren requests me to sit here with you and fan you until her return—and—and—said you wished to speak with me. Every one is hurrying to be ready to leave by one o'clock. Shall you be able to sit up and stand the short drive with comfort, think you?" she asked. He made room for her by his side, where his aunt had sat but a moment ago.

"Flora, I can stand anything but to be separated from one whom I love so tenderly."

"Edwin—what?"

"I must say farewell, Flora."

"I know that my parents go direct from this place to Carlisle, but surely you—Edwin—I may see you often there ere we sail for Paris in three weeks."

"Stern duty bids me leave you, Flora; but your sweet spirit will be with me, wander where I may. And you, my dearest, shall be my heart's pure flame, guiding my steps aright and leading me on from success to success, from height to height, to fame and glory."

"But, Edwin; oh! why should you leave me?"

If you love me as you say—if you do indeed love me——” She faltered.

“It is love for you, Flora, that bids me seek the paths of glory; to gain your praise; to win your warmest approval I must haste to the field of glory, where I may reap honor and fame. You, with your new-found parents, go to Carlisle—to Paris—Italy. I go from here, straight to Solway Moss; will give up my commission as Captain of a small band of militia, and cast my lot with the English fleet for the Netherlands, where war still rages in great fury. I am offered a commission and will take command of a company of regular soldiers. I cannot now ask you to be my wife, as much as I love you; for, Flora, fate has snatched you from me, and placed you upon a pinnacle so high that I may never be able to reach you. And, Dearest, I do admit to you, that my pride has intervened, when I might have asked you to become my bride—though madly I loved you—and withheld me, while I thought you to be the daughter of the Earl’s housekeeper, from asking your hand in marriage; and though I did repeatedly attempt it, I never did ask you to be my wife; and shall I now, that your fortune is changed, thus take advantage of your love? No, Dearest, my manhood will not permit me to do it; for, while I can boast of a noble lineage, I possess nothing else of which to boast but a noble manhood; and this I must sustain. Shall I, without other heritage, offer to wed with the heiress of the noble house de Bruce, and receive with her hand possession of her ample domain, an estate worth ten thousand pounds a year, which I learn Lord de Bruce has settled on you in your own name, Lady Marjorie de Bruce? And I, with no more than a Captain’s commission and a pedigree. Indeed, the disparity

between us is greater now than erstwhile. I have been robber of you, sweet Marjorie. Even while I was speaking the words that would have bound me fast to you—with your assent—I was called away, and you have been snatched from me, and placed beyond my reach.”

She raised her soft blue eyes to his, like violets in a dewy morn.

“Dear Edwin, whatever may have happened me, I feel that you are my peer; you are of noble birth, of irreproachable lineage, and my love for you is such that were you now proven to be of just such parentage as I was thought to be when you won my love I would not change; you would be just as dear to me. Then would I prove the depth of woman’s love. So wildly do I love you, Edwin, that the new home to which I go—a paradise now awaiting to receive me—will contain no joy for me if not shared with you. Must you go? Oh, must you leave me, Edwin?” She clasped her hands, while tears, like rain, ran down her classic face. She had spoken ardently, and now bowed her head and sobbed, with a feeling of shame at the passion she had displayed.

“Now, choose thee, Edwin, betwixt wealth and honor,” he thought to himself, and for a moment he wavered; bright hope dawned in his soul, then he said: “Oh, that I were by that dim lake, where my love might take its last farewell from this cruel world, where fate intervenes to rob me of all; there to lie in death’s cold shadows——”

“No, Edwin; no! You break my heart; speak not thus, sweet Edwin!”

“Sweet darling, I must say farewell; all now await us. God’s angels watch your footsteps while in some lone region of the earth I roam. And while thus I shall wander, far from thee, my Flora,

I shall sigh for thee, for the sweet fragrance of your breath upon my cheek, the fall of your sweet voice upon my ear, when we shall be far, far apart, whose every thoughts are one; whose voices would utter the same wish. In vain, Dearest, shall I sigh for your fairy voice in sweetest song among the trees and flowers, and to see the heaven of those sweet eyes. Sweet Marjorie, remember that in sorrow and pain my unchanged heart will cling to thee. The wild waves will soon waft me hence to distant realms." She sobbed and sighed.

"Flora,

"'When thy sighs are soothing to my troubled heart,
And thy teardrops are as pearls,
Think, dearest one, what perfect bliss
There would be in a smile—a kiss!'

"Then lift up your face and smile on me, and kiss farewell."

"Farewell." Smiling through her tears.

"Farewell." He pressed her to his heart.

They hear Lady Hawren in the hall, coming, speaking to Sandy:

"We must be starting now. What hour is it, Sandy?"

"Thae hour o' one hae just clappit, me Leddy; we maun be going."

"Louis, will you assist Edwin to his chaise? Ah, here he is!" she said, as Edwin and Flora appeared in the doorway. Lady Hawren cast them a glance. Both appeared sad, but resigned. She knew at once that Edwin hadn't yielded. After many loving farewells, Flora was placed in Lord de Bruce's splendid coach, drawn by four fine grays which he that morning had ordered out from Carlisle, with her parents, her cousins, and Mrs. MacLeod,

who, as Flora's foster-mother, was to live hereafter with them, and dashed off in fine style, attended by a retinue of servants in glittering livery.

Captain Arranton, looking very sad, took his chaise for Solway Moss; while the Earl and Kathryn, Doctor Godkins and Mrs. O'Neal, Lady Hawren and Nora, entered the royal old coach and rolled away to Fleetwood Castle.



CHAPTER XLIX.

SHIPWRECK.

"But the stately, wide-winged ship
Lies wrecked on the unknown deep;
Far under, dead in his coral bed,
The lover lies asleep."

THERE was soon a double wedding at Fleetwood Castle; for, within four weeks after the return from the old castle, Doctor Godkins and Mrs. O'Neal, Guy Brignol and Miss Hamilton were quietly married in the chapel at Fleetwood by Rev. Derward Hayston.

Doctor Godkins and his bride took up their residence at once at Hawdon Manor, Lord Hawdon's country seat, where he had a fine practice, and where, as governor of the place, he looked so carefully after his nephew's interests that the old country seat soon assumed a new aspect, Lord Hawdon having returned to London, where he spent most of his time with his sister, the Baroness of Brundridge.

Guy and Annie set sail immediately for America, where, on meeting Lord Drysdale, who was preparing to sail for his home in England, Annie

laughingly told him, merely wishing to tease him, that there was no use of his going to England, for Lady Hawren was so well beloved by all, and had so many admirers and suitors, that she would doubtless be married long before he could arrive on England's shores. Which tidings greatly discomforted him, though Annie had meant no harm.

Lord and Lady de Bruce, with their daughter, sailed immediately for Paris, where they would remain until after Christmas, intending to spend the remainder of the winter traveling in Italy. On their departure, the Misses Bruneaugh returned to Fleetwood, where they were to remain until after Kathryn's marriage, which would be celebrated on Christmas Day.

One week after their return to Fleetwood from the old castle there had been a terrific storm at sea, which, as it was afterward discovered, had caused many shipwrecks.

Now, about one month after this storm, and only a short time after the double wedding and departure of their friends, Lady Hawren and Kathryn sat about a cosy fire, for it was the last of October, with Nora, whom Kathryn claimed as a companion, since Flora was gone and Aunt Mary was married. Lady Hawren was called out to the servant's hall. On her return to the sitting room, Kathryn observed a deadly pallor on her face. Springing forward, she cried:

"Oh, mother, mother! what has happened?"

"Oh—Gaston—Petronius——!"

"Mother! Has Gaston dared to come here?" asked Kathryn, with flashing eyes.

"No, no, child! He is dead—dead, drowned—shipwrecked."

"Oh—o—o——!"

"Petronius is below, poor boy! his clothing soiled

and worn. He has made his way here on foot to tell us of this. There was an equinoxial storm, you well remember, on the eighth of September. The brig—almost unmanned after the engagement with the militia in which Gaston had received a severe wound—the Captain dead, Petroneus says they could not manage the ship; it was swept against the rock-ribbed coast of Arran and wrecked. He says all on board were lost save himself and one other, who saved themselves by clinging to a spar, and were dashed ashore on the island. A number of bodies were washed ashore, among them they recognized Gaston and the ship's mate."

"Oh, mother! Is it not dreadful to think that Gaston—poor boy—would live such a life, and die such a death," said Kathryn, choking up, "and lost! lost!—utterly lost!—Oh, mother!"

"As to this, we cannot say, darling. God is good, and is able to save to the uttermost. Who can say but that in the last moment, even in the tempestuous storm, while billows rolled high and lightnings flashed; with the foaming sea surging around him, amid the swirling waves and the straggling foam of the briny deep, he may have lifted his eyes to One Who can save in the twinkling of an eye," Kathryn sobbed on her mother's bosom.

The Earl and the young ladies and Louis had been out riding; now Nora, hearing them in the great hall, ran to meet them, and led the young ladies to their apartments, while the Earl entered the sitting room and found Lady Hawren and Kathryn lachrymose in each other's arms.

"Dear aunt, oh, what has troubled you! What has happened?" he cried anxiously, as he drew near and placed his arms around them both.

Lady Hawren told him all; and begged of him to

care for Petroneus, who, she feared, might be arrested for complicity in smuggling.

The Earl promised to clothe him and give him employment at Weirwolf, assuring her that if he would remain quietly in that place there would be no danger of his being troubled.

In a few days the Earl, with Louis and five-and-twenty attendants, set out for London, where his city residence was to be put in the best style for the reception of his bride by New Year's Day, for they were to start directly after marriage to take up their abode in the old Weirwolf city house in Southampton Square. He arrived in London in ample time for the opening of the season, the first of November.



CHAPTER L.

KNIGHTHOOD.

"Knights, by their oaths, should right poor ladies' harms."

"LOUIS," said the Earl, a few days after their arrival in London, "let all be in readiness promptly by twelve o'clock to-morrow, for we must arrive at court on time. I must be in the presence at one."

"Aye, aye, my Lord; I will see to it that all things are in order, and that your Lordship's retinue makes a splendid appearance."

"And let there be no display of weapons, Louis, more than is demanded for fashion's sake. Our men are rather disposed to make a display of arms."

'Aye, especially is it so with those wily Scots among your Lordship's followers. Aye, I will see to it that they have no other arms but their poniards

and court swords; for, I warrant you, my Lord, an' I see not to it, these bonny Scots will set forth for court, making a great show, a fine display, no doubt, each rejoicing in a full parade of heavy Scotch arms, such as all seem bent on carrying at all times and on all occasions, and your Lordship would see, depending from handsome double-laced belts, not only Highland dirks, but black-watch pistols, whingers and Jedwood axes; wearing jack-boots and Bannockburn spurs, and their Highland plaid fastened about their shoulder with a great brooch, as large as a platter, to say nothing of their ever-present spleuchens," said Louis, manifesting some contempt.

"They have their own fashions, Louis, to which they are firmly attached; but are good and true men, and some are of the noblest families.'

"Aye, my Lord; and your Lordship's relations and friends have flocked in, in great numbers, to wait upon your Lordship to court, and I dare say your retinue will bear down the rude followers of many a be-ruffled noble that I might mention."

"I care not for that, Louis; but some among my men are hot-blooded and independent natures, of many different families, each holding himself better than the other, and by rivalry easily provoked into quarrels. I trust there may be no imprudence, rioting or strife among them. I have, as you know, a great antipathy to bloodshed."

"Aye, aye, my Lord; rest assured I with my good marshal will see to all that. Your Lordship's following shall be so splendid as to outshine and leave in darkness the retainers of all other nobles. And even these wild Highlanders, my Lord, shall be brought into subjection, will yield to present conditions and make as fine appearance as any."

"Louis, the King has promised to bestow some especial and deserved marks of grace to-morrow. It

is not necessary for me to say to you, bear yourself well under the ordeal; for I have no doubt you will conduct yourself with the greatest decorum; and remember that modesty is a crowning virtue."

"Aye, aye, my Lord," returned Louis, with a conscious blush, assuming a grave and gracious dignity, "I am deeply indebted to your Lordship, and must acknowledge——"

"Tut, tut, Louis! I have this day transferred to you the estate of Redmound, which has reverted to me, and you will be known as Knight of Redmound."

"My Lord, your liberality is unbounded—I know not how to accept this bounteous——"

"There, there, Louis; I owe you yet more than this; your friendship and care all these years, your services rendered me, an orphan boy, are more than can ever be repaid."

"All—all these have long since been doubly repaid, my Lord."

"Besides, Louis, I will hold nothing as mine that was ever *his*, who, though gone to his reward, was a disgrace to his name, though it be black as any in the land; with whose demise the link is severed that held us connected with the malignants of the Old Hermitage. So, Louis, in order to be quit of all, I shuffle off onto you this bit of property."

"My Lord, I cannot speak my——"

"There, Louis, I am glad to be able to bestow upon one so worthy this fine estate of Redmound."

On the following day, the noble Earl of Fleetwood passed on his way to the palace, followed by a long and splendidly equipped train of friends and retainers, the appearance of his cavalcade making a great showing, numerous and imposing. Arriving at the same time with many others at the palace

gates, they had only a short time to wait, for soon the bells tolled, the great gates were thrown open, and the nobles entered, attended by those privileged by rank. The Earl of Fleetwood, attended by a number of distinguished friends and relations, passed on with the others to the crowded entrance, the ushers loudly calling, "Make room! Make room!" Many eyes followed his noble, commanding figure, as with a warm greeting, a gentle smile or a kind word he wended his way into the lofty chambers of the royal palace, and his followers arranged themselves along one side of the splendid apartment. At the upper end of this long gallery the folding doors were thrown open, and near the royal throne, overshadowed by a state canopy, the King stood, ready to receive the homage of his subjects. With many others, the noble Earl of Fleetwood moved forward, his sumptuous court dress most becoming to his handsome and commanding figure, embroidered with gold and pearls, his girdle and sword-scabbard of richest velvet, with buckles of gold. Over all, his long robe of state flowed gracefully from his shoulders. His charming countenance and courtly bearing so well matching his splendid appointments, it was easily seen that he was the finest specimen of manhood in the presence.

The King was soon surrounded by a number of nobles and statesmen in robes of state in rich array, and received most graciously the nobles who thronged him; but to none he showed more cordiality than to the Earl of Fleetwood; for this nobleman stood in as great favor with His Majesty as had his grandfather, the Baron of Weirwolf, with William III.

Now, after some matters had been disposed of, others adjusted, and some bits of royal justice attended to, the King summoned the Earl of Fleet-

wood to his side, who approached with ease and grace, and said:

"My Lord Fleetwood, I bethink me of it, you have made suit in behalf of one of your faithful followers ere now, one whose good gifts and fidelity have been of much service to you. My Lord, say on which of your followers you would wish the honor of knighthood bestowed."

"Please, Your Majesty," returned the Earl, standing erect in his glorious beauty, "I would speak for Mr. Louis Kearney, my master of the horse and my friend; a man of ancient name and unsullied lineage, the son of an old cavalier, who has rendered much service to his country; he is a necessary sharer of my confidences, and has rendered me indispensable assistance in Your Majesty's service; he is of gentle blood and has a pedigree."

"And shall receive from us, my Lord of Fleetwood, due reward. Knowing that you and yours are devoted to us, we will gladly bestow on this, your faithful follower, who has been so long a time with you—in your service—the honor of chivalry, remembering his father, who, in his day, rendered much service to the King. The learned men of Heralds College shall grant him a coat-of-arms in accordance with his pedigree. And, insomuch, my Lord, as I have learned that you, from your bounteous liberality, have ceded to this young man now about to receive the accolade one of your noble estates, known as Redmound—?"

"True, Your Majesty."

"He shall be known as Knight of Redmound. Lend us your sword, my Lord Fleetwood; we wear no such useless appendage." The Earl, on bended knee, presented his sword to His Majesty, who said:

"Louis Kearney—and naming two others, who

also had been spoken for as candidates for the honor of knighthood—stand forth.”

Louis, who was not far from the Earl, with the others, presented himself on bended knee before the King, who laid on the honor-bestowing blow, saying to each:

“In the name of God and St. George, we dub thee Knight. Be faithful, be brave, and be you fortunate.” Dismissing them, he said to Louis:

“Rise, Sir Louis Kearney, Knight of Redmound.” They rose and made a deep obeisance to the sovereign who had done so much for them by bestowing this especial mark of grace. Then came the buckling on of the spurs and other rites. When the audience terminated, the King said:

“My Lord of Fleetwood, let us have your presence at the privy council to be held presently. By the way, there will be matters of importance for debate; you will attend us?”

“With the greatest pleasure, Your Majesty.”

“There is the business, too, in regard to the matter in which I promised you assistance—the restoration of title and estates to one in whose behalf you have interested yourself so efficiently—I believe it is assured, my Lord.” The Earl pressed the King’s hand, saying:

“I am deeply Your Majesty’s debtor——”

“Not so, not so, my Lord!” broke in the King, “We will never refuse you a favor, besides, we owe justice to all, even from the greatest of our subjects down to the meanest. But, hold; there is a little matter of confidence between ourselves—you remember? We must directly have a tete-a-tete. And you promised that Lady Hawren and her daughter should be presented. Do not forget this again, my Lord.”

“Your Majesty, since recent events have turned

such a flattering light on my prospects, I shall be most happy to make a confidante of Your Grace, and receive your approval and congratulations; and, furthermore, will take pleasure in presenting Lady Hawren and her daughter, Lady Kathryn Arranton, who, with Your Majesty's approval, will be presented on New Year's Day, as the Countess of Fleetwood," said the Earl proudly.

"Truly," exclaimed the King, patting him on the shoulder, "that is grand; grand, my Lord!"

At the termination of this audience, the nobles and courtiers were invited to a splendid banquet in the hall of the palace.

On leaving the hall of reception and reaching the courtyard, the newly-made knights were assailed on every hand, by heralds pursuivants and others, with a call for bounty, with the usual cry of "Largess! Largess!" The acolytes of chivalry responded promptly with donations, which liberality was proudly received by those whose business it was to register their armorial bearings. Then Sir Louis was greeted with loud acclamations by the dependents of the Earl of Fleetwood:

"Long life to a worthy Knight!"

"Health and honor to Sir Louis Kearney, the honored Knight of Redmound!"

"Honor, wealth, happiness!" Then as Louis drew up among them they began the cry, "Largess! Largess!"

Louis returned to Fleetwood, wearing a "high plume, that nodded o'er his head," and the golden spurs of knighthood

"For knightly jousts, and fierce encounters fit."

CHAPTER LI.

WEDDING.

"O will ye hear of mirthful bourd?
Or will ye hear of courtesie?
Or will ye hear how a gallant lord
Was wedded to a gay ladye?"

THE Earl and Sir Louis have returned from London. Christmas again approaches at Fleetwood; and the hour is at hand for the celebration of the marriage rites between the noble Earl of Fleetwood and Kathryn Arranton, Lady of Hawren.

The lovely creations of white satin, crêpe, and finest *point à l'aiguille* have been draped about her splendid form. Loving hands have clasped, with a crescent of sparkling gems, the misty veil, and adjusted the wreath of orange blossoms upon the stately brow of the blushing bride.

The noble Earl of Fleetwood, in the flush of his glorious manhood, in princely array, proudly leads her forth to the grand old chapel amid a wild burst of minstrelsy, joy-bells ringing and a confusing din of booming guns from the bulwark. Soon were spoken the "golden words, which made them forever one"; after which, he led his Countess to the chair of state, two steps from the floor and large enough for them both, surmounted by a canopy of crimson velvet, in which, immediately over their heads, richly embroidered in arabesque needlework and inwrought with seed-pearls, were two coronets. Two silver lamps, diffusing a delicious odor, threw a soft, shimmering light over them, as his Lordship

placed her among the soft cushions, his fascinating blue eyes beaming with happiness, her face gorgeously radiant, while they received the good wishes of their many friends.

On the following morning, in the courtyard crowded with splendid glass-quartered coaches and many another style of carriages, with liveried trappings of gilt and leather, and richly painted panels, postillions, outriders and a hundred attendants thronged around in hurried preparation for departure.

The Countess of Fleetwood was taken from the arms of her loving mother and placed in the Earl's charmingly new and brilliant *coupé*, just then coming in vogue and which he had purchased for the occasion, having room inside for two, with driver's seat outside.

How charming Lady Kathryn looked against the bright linings and soft cushions! The Earl enters and finds a place by her side. Sir Louis closed the heavy glass door. They were closely followed by a sumptuous coach-and-six bearing the arms of the Lord Lieutenant of Cumberland, with the Earl and Countess of Carlisle. Then followed a long line of gaily coaches filled with many of the noble Lords and Ladies who had attended the wedding. All these were followed by numerous attendants in liveries, all glittering and bright, making a grand parade.

As they were whirled away from Fleetwood, the Earl, realizing that now Kathryn was really and truly his very own, placed his arm around her, and pressing her close to his side, said, softly:

"Now you are, indeed, my own, 'my wedded bride, by holiest vow.' In a few days we will be ensconced in our own town house, where you will be mistress of my home. How happy am I!"

She smiled up at him through her tears, for she was leaving her mother behind, who could not be persuaded to leave Fleetwood yet.



CHAPTER LII.

A MOMENT OF EXCITEMENT AT FLEETWOOD.

"Do not say that life is waning,
Or that hope's sweet day is set;
While I've thee and love remaining
Life is in the horizon yet.

"Do not think those charms are flying,
Tho' thy roses fade and fall;
Beauty hath a grace undying,
Which in thee survives them all."

Two months have passed since the departure of the Earl and Countess. Lady Hawren, sad and lonely, is beginning to feel quite miserable. The hour of eve is drawing on, and in the ladies' sitting room, or Lady Margaret's boudoir, she sits thinking over the past. Many memories cluster about her. It was here that Kathryn and Flora had spent their mornings in study and the afternoons were made joyous with music. Here she had sat with her embroidery, joining in the pleasant conversations and merry jests. She thought of Mrs. Edmonds; of her elegant refinement, and her delightful social qualities; of Annie, kind, but, oh, thoughtlessly cruel! Such a tease! Both married and happy now.

Miss Augusta and Rosa and Nora still remained at Fleetwood as company for Lady Hawren. On the day previous Miss Augusta had received a letter from Lady de Bruce, saying their party had just arrived in Carlisle, something earlier, too, than they

had anticipated, and how gladly would she and Flora hasten to Fleetwood, but that Lord de Bruce had gone—with the coach-and-six—to Forest Lodge, their country seat in Dumfriesshire, near Sanquhar, and she knew not when he would return. So on this bright and lovely morning Lady Hawren had sent Julien with the coach and attendants to fetch them. Miss Augusta and Rosa, desiring to go also, accompanied him, and would return on the next day evening, leaving Nora for company with Lady Hawren.

Julien and the young ladies had scarcely gone when Captain Arranton—unexpected—arrived from the village, three miles away, where Major O'Connor, with a detachment of dragoons, had just been stationed for a brief period, awaiting the sailing of a fleet for India, where they were to go to aid in quelling an insurrection, having found on arriving in the Netherlands that peace was made and that war was at an end.

Accompanied by the jovial Major, and attended by Silas, his black body-servant, who still followed his master's fortunes, Edwin had ridden over to see his aunt, expecting to spend the time intervening between this and the sailing of the vessel for India at Fleetwood.

And thus he had come, not expecting to have the pleasure to see Flora, whom he supposed to be yet in Italy. And Flora would arrive on the morrow, little dreaming of meeting her Edwin, whom she supposed to be in a foreign land.

But there was yet in store for Lady Hawren, on this day, a surprise of vastly more importance to her happiness than either of these visits, as much as she appreciated them, for she knew not of another visitor hastily and anxiously approaching on the highway toward Fleetwood Castle.

But, as we have said, evening was drawing on, and she sat sadly ruminating over the past. Edwin, who had been with her all day, glad of a little respite from the constraint of his office, was out now, rambling over the old place. With a heavy sigh, which was almost a sob, she walked up the great hall. Wondering where Nora was, she lifted the portiere, and found her sleeping on the library sofa, a book which she had been reading lay on her breast. After a pleasant talk, a romp and a lively quarrel—all in fun—with the Major, that morning, he had gone back to the village, leaving her all flustered and happy, she knew not why. Lady Hawren, turning toward the stairway, passed old Sandy, who, in order to occupy his time, was changing things about. Taking down an old hat, which had not been worn for many days, he carefully dusted it, then gently placed it on another rack. Removing from a console shelf a unique jar, he dusted it, then placed it upon another shelf; and thus, for employment, he spent his time, the while talking to himself in an undertone.

“Are you alone, Sandy? I think I heard you speak to someone. Where did Captain Arranton go?”

“Aye, thae fine Captain, Meleddy? ’E took ’is foil, Meleddy, hi think ’e ca’ed it, and went out lang syne, I think me ’e gaed oot ta play fighting wi’ yon auld earl thae ca’ thae Count, Meleddy.”

“Oh! Has gone out to practise fencing with the old French gardener. I am going to walk in the old picture gallery a while, Sandy. If he comes in and asks for me, you will know where to find me.”

“Weil, weil, Meleddy! A wi’nna forget it.”

Lady Hawren passed slowly up the long flight of steps and down a long corridor. How lonely she felt as she passed Kathryn’s door and Annie’s, just opposite, then Flora’s room, too, untenanted, so

dreary! She hastened by, and turning to the right, found herself in the long picture-gallery, where hung the Cliftons, ancestors of the Earl for many generations. And soon, too, the Earl would have paintings of himself and Kathryn, her Kathryn, made and placed here. "The noble Earl, the last of the Cliftons——" she mused.

"How splendid he is! How noble! Kathryn has done well; but—I am alone——"

She went to a window looking out on the park. Her thoughts grew more intense; and pondering over the past, she became oblivious to all around her, and bowing her head against the casement, she sobbed and sighed: "Alone, alone! My heart is all alone!"

What had Annie meant in a letter she had written immediately on reaching America, and which Lady Hawren had received only this morning, it having been delayed in some way: "It is said he is to marry his cousin, and sail immediately for his home in England——"

Her heart seemed turned to stone, as she mused over this sentence. Hearing a footfall, she hastily dried her eyes, and turning, beheld Sandy slowly wending his way down the long gallery. Approaching, he bowed low, and said:

"Aweel Meleddy, some ane has ca'ed, and wad be pleased ta see ye i'thae drawing-room, een noo; ae friend, Meleddy, 's a 'e said."

"Oh!" said Lady Hawren, "can Julien have returned with Lady de Bruce?"

"Nae, nae, Meleddy; it's nae Leddy de Bruce, neither, but some o' thae traveling nobeelity, wi' gapping flunkies a' clad like sae mony showmen."

"What name, Sandy?"

"Oh, aye; 'a said—'s—let's see——" Sandy placed his hand on his brow, trying to recall the

name that had been given him. "His lairdship—Me-laird—Laird Stale—de Stale hi think, Meledly."

"Oh! Stale? Stale? A stranger! Then I must hasten to meet him. I did not think that Julien and the girls would return before to-morrow morning with Lady de Bruce and Flora. Who can this be? Some nobleman passing who knows the Earl, doubtless, perhaps from London; and he may have a message from the Earl and Kathryn. I must freshen up a little."

She fled up the corridor to consult her cheval glass before presenting herself before a stranger. She smoothed her hair, wondering where Hortense was, yet did not ring for her. She was always lovely, but this evening, perhaps on account of her recent emotion, there was a roseate glow upon her cheeks as she descended the stairway.

Sandy was absentminded, and forgetting the new arrival, he turned him about and began to scrutinize some of the old paintings, for it was a long time since he had hobbled up that long flight of steps before.

While Lady Hawren, in the gallery, had been looking among the old paintings, engaged in reminiscences, a splendid chaise-and-four drew up in the courtyard near the warden's tower, and Lord Drysdale descended. The warden, seeing no attendants in the court, conducted His Lordship to the great entrance, and leaving him with Sandy, returned to his Lordship's chaise and attendants.

Sandy met Lord Drysdale, and from his elegant appearance and the splendid chaise-and-four of which he caught a glimpse with the glittering retinue at once pronounced him some great noble, bobbed and bowed, and with many obeisances conducted him into the drawing-room.

Meeting no one, His Lordship asked: "Is the Earl at home?"

"Nae, nae, Melaird; 'e 'as gaed ta Lonnon towne wi' 'is leddye."

"The lady—is Lady Hawren—may I see Lady Hawren?" he asked, with a quavering voice.

"Oh! aye, aye, Melaird, Meleddie gaed ta walk abune thae ha'. Hae a seat; Ise warrant you, 'e sall sune find her for your Lairdship." And Sandy started full tilt, without knowing who he was to announce.

"Hold, uncle—my man—hold a moment! Tell Lady Hawren an old friend wishes to see her—Lord Drysdale."

'Aye, aye, Melaird; I's warrant to sune fetch Her Ladyship; God sain her, she's sae lone noo, syne Melaird takit awa her bairn, puir leddie!" And without asking Sir Hugh to lay off his great-coat, Sandy trotted off.

Lord Drysdale, walking the floor, awaited her coming with much trepidation; for the little remark Annie had jestingly made on meeting him had rankled in his bosom, causing him the loss of many hours' sleep; and he felt now to find her promised or married to one of those suitors whom Annie had mentioned would be more than he could endure after awaiting all these years. But Mr. Barry had, just on the eve of his departure from America, committed to his care some documents and letters for Edwin, which he had promised most faithfully to deliver, either to Edwin himself, or place in the hands of Lady Hawren; and if—oh, if he should find her already married—and he groaned—it would be a purely business trip. He had wrought himself into a perfect ague of distress, when he heard the rustling of brocade descending the stairs; then on the hardwood floor of the great hall a gentle tap-

ping of little heels approaching—nearer, nearer. He stood in the centre of the lofty apartment with bated breath, awaiting—he knew not what.

She came intrepidly on, thinking to meet some old friend of the Earl, probably on his way home from Parliament. She entered; their eyes met; he noted a look of joyous recognition. She uttered a little shriek, and on the impulse of the moment they both rushed forward, as if impelled by some hidden hand; there was such a sudden transition in her heart, from utter dejection to unutterable joy. He received her in his arms. In a moment she was overwhelmed with mortification; she had revealed her feelings for him, and was not he married to another, perhaps? Now what should she do? She felt that she was swooning; but he was kissing her face so tenderly, and asking:

“Oh, have you kept your promise?”

“Yes, oh, yes!” she returned falteringly; but—but—you—you——” struggling to free herself.

“I?—love you—love you so!” he said, kissing her lips and holding her in his clasp.

“But I—I thought—Annie wrote that—that——”

“Annie? Oh——, that mischief-loving girl has made me miserable!”

“She said that you were to marry your cousin——”

“Never, never! She told me of a number of suitors, saying you would marry Doctor Somebody, or Lord Somebody else; and that you would doubtless be wed ere I could arrive.”

“Ah, cruel, cruel Annie!”

“Then you are not going to wed with any of them, and will be my own wife?”

“Oh, no, no, no! Yes, yes!——I mea——” He covered her mouth with kisses, her arms found their way around his neck and her lips responded to his

own. He then placed her on a chair and stood before her.

Meanwhile a great commotion had been excited outside, for when Lady Hawren, on entering, had recognized his Lordship with a little shriek, Nora, who in the library had been dreaming of smugglers, started up, and on rushing through the portieres, beheld a man in a long, peculiar-looking great-coat, holding Lady Hawren in his arms and she struggling for freedom. The scene at the old castle immediately occurred to her mind; and thinking of nothing else, the startled girl rushed into the great hall crying:

"Pirates! Smugglers!" Running against Hortense, who was just entering from the back court, she told her that a horrid-looking smuggler was carrying away Lady Hawren. "Run and tell the men, Hortense!"

"Oh, ma foi! Mon Dieu! Ze pirate is carry away miladi, zhust as 'e did ma petite at the old castle! Oh, Ciel! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Helas! me, me, what may I do? I vill run for ze Count and ze Capitaine." And down the garden path she flew, crying:

"Pirates! Robbers! Murder!" Nora following close behind her, rallying all the servants as she went.

Now a troupe came up the great hall, headed by Captain Arranton and the Count, foils in hand, ready for combat. On seeing a man standing before Lady Hawren, his back toward the door, Edwin exclaimed:

"How now, thou villain! Why this intrusion? Speak, wretched man, ere I run you through with my——" Drawing back his foil ready for a thrust, doubtless, in his wild excitement, thinking he wielded his Andrea Ferara, and held it poised for a

direct blow. Lord Drysdale turned. Edwin, recognizing their old friend, cried as he clasped his hand:

"Why, bless my soul! My dear Lord Drysdale! How glad—I have been nearly frightened out of my life!"

"Why, how was that?"

"What! Edwin! What means this confusion?" cried Lady Hawren, in dismay at the disturbed and disorderly appearance of her household.

"Why," returned Edwin, almost out of breath and with a crestfallen air, "I was taking some fencing exercises with the gardener, here, who, I assure you, sir, holds a good hand, knows the points of attack, and would prove himself no mean foe in an encounter, when my Lady's maid came running, out of breath, screaming 'Pirates! Robbers! Murder!' followed by Miss Nora here——" He looked about, but saw Nora nowhere. "On inquiring the cause of her excitement, she informed me there was a horrid-looking pirate, who had suddenly entered and was carrying away her noble mistress."

Lord Drysdale, shaking with laughter, said:

"Put up your foil, young man. I fancy in an encounter with any one determined on carrying away your aunt, it would not prove a formidable weapon."

Lady Hawren, her face crimson with excitement, went into the hall and dismissed the servants, saying to them that she was in no immediate danger of being transported.

"Peste! Marbleu! How mon Capitaine did run! No pirate! No smugglare! Pasques-dieu!" cried the Count, as he disappeared in the back court.

To Jenny, who had been employed as house-keeper, since the dénouement at the old castle, she said:

"Jenny, see that we have an extra nice dinner for four only in the small dining parlor. We have to entertain a noble guest."

Edwin, blushing deeply, put away his foil, and assisting Lord Drysdale off with his great-coat, conducted him to a dressing room to prepare for dinner; then went back into the garden, where he had an appointment to meet Major O'Connor for a private talk. He had now spent so much time with Lord Drysdale that he feared the Major would be out of patience waiting for him, if he had arrived at the rendezvous.



CHAPTER LIII.

NORA AND MAJOR O'CONNOR.

—"Thou sweetest thing
That e'er did fix its lightly fibred spray
To the rude rock; ah! wouldst thou cling to me,
Rough and storm-worn I am; yet, loving me as
Thou truly dost, I will love thee again
With true and honest heart, though
To be the mate of such sweet gentleness
—all unmete."

ON reaching the back part of the garden, and sending Captain Arranton and the Count to Lady Hawren's rescue, Nora, almost overcome with fear and excitement, being unable to follow, sank in a little heap on a bed of early primroses, and buried her face in her hands, her red-gold hair, all disheveled, falling in ringlets over them, and burst into a flood of tears at the thought of Lady Hawren being abducted as Lady Kathryn had been at the old castle, never once thinking how impossible it would be for pirates to make their way into the

castle at Fleetwood. She had been so excited that she did not stop to consider that such an attempt here would prove altogether unsuccessful. She loved Lady Hawren dearly, and was sobbing convulsively when, hearing the gate behind her click, she raised her head just as Major O'Connor entered. He sprang to her side, crying:

"Oh, Nora—jewel! What can cause you to weep thus?"

Dashing back her hair with both hands, she rose quickly, and clasping him by the arm, she cried:

"Oh, Major, I am so glad to see you—you can rescue her—I know!"

"Ah, jewel! I appreciate your warm welcome; but, pray, of whom do you speak?" he asked, taking both of her hands and looking into her face with undisguised admiration. Nora blushed in confusion. Her eyes sought the ground, as she replied:

"Oh, dear Lady Hawren has been abducted, Major. I think—I do not know—I was so frightened—a man rushed in, one of the pirates or robbers or—or—something——"

"How you surprise me, darling! A pirate or robber here in Fleetwood Castle?"

"Yes, yes! I was asleep in the library, and heard Lady Hawren scream; and looking in, I saw a strange-looking man, wearing a great-coat and heavy beard; he had her—oh, run to her assistance—to help Captain Edwin and the Count, who have gone on. Let's run!" Taking hands, like two children, they started swiftly up the garden path, but had not proceeded far when they met Kitty Kyte, Nora's own maid, flying toward them.

"What is it, Kitty? Has the villain carried her off, indeed?" cried Nora and the Major in a breath.

"No, no, not at all, Mistress Nora; 'tis no villain neither; but a gentleman quite; Lady Hawren's own

friend, and just come to visit her, and nothing more. And is just awfully nice, too, and Captain Arranton ran and shook hands and called him 'My Lord.' "

"Well, Kitty, you can run back, now," said the Major, "since Lady Hawren is in no danger, and tell Captain Arranton that I will await him in the back of the garden—but, Kitty!" he called, as the maid had turned hurriedly to run back, "do not trouble him while he is engaged with Lady Hawren's friend. I will wait here for him, and you Kitty, need not come back. I will take care of your mistress." Kitty flew back.

He led Nora down another path, the dry leaves rustling musically under their feet, as they walked among the thick shrubbery, now brown and sear.

"Nora," he said, "I had a double purpose in returning here this evening——"

"Oh, Major, you came to see the Captain—you had an appointment to meet him here?"

"Yes, I intended to have a talk with him, but was not going to leave without seeking an interview with you, also; but now that I have met you here instead of him, I will speak with you first."

"Oh, Major! Are you going to leave—are you ordered away again so soon?" she cried with misgivings.

"Ah, jewel! Should you care much if it were so? There's talk of war now."

"Oh!" Her face crimsoned, her hands trembled on his arm. "Oh, Major, you shall not go!"

"If I thought—Nora—if I knew——" he said, placing his hand on hers.

"What? Oh, what! You shall never go away to another miserable old war—oh, you will go away and be slain, as was my father, whom you knew, and you know Aunt Mary, and it seems that you are one of us—that you are—oh! all that—that is

left, since Aunt Mary is married and Rorey is away all the time."

"Nora, a soldier's duty is to fight. In the army I am surrounded by those who love me. If I should fall, I die for my country——"

She dropped her head on his arm, with a burst of tears; placing his arm around her, he said:

"Oh, jewel! I did not mean to distress you so, surely you do care for Charlie; you would not have him go?"

"No, no!" she sobbed, "I would have you remain here always."

"But should I give up my commission and set out on a new life, I should miss those who love me in the army—my comrades—here I have no home, no—no wife—no one to love me. I should miss my old soldier friends. I could never live thus, with no one to love me."

"Oh-oo!" she sobbed.

"Nora, there is just one thing can cause me to retire to private life."

"Oh, what?"

"Just the love of a sweet little woman," he said, pressing her hand warmly.

Raising her sparkling eyes to his, she asked:

"What woman? Oh, surely she would love you; how could she help it?"

"I fear she loves another."

"Another! She could not!"

"Jewel, could *you* love a rough old soldier, so much older than yourself?"

"I? Oh!—and would you stay? Would you give up your dear old comrades, and your old life for just *me*?"

"Just you, darling, if you love me!"

"Major! I have not heard you say, yet, that you

love me. Should I be loving a man who does not love me at all?"

"There, now, darling! I do love you with all my heart, and want you to be my own little wife."

"Better than those old boys in the army?" she asked.

"Yes, my darling, better than all!"

Giving him a glorious look that confirmed his hopes, she continued to question him:

"And would you never, never go away to war again, and leave me—and be slain?"

"Never, darling, never! for I should then have something to stay for. Now tell me, darling, do you—will you——"

"I do—I will——"

He smothered her with kisses, then asked:

"Better than all—all besides?"

"Yes, better than *every one else on earth* besides."

"Oh, jewel! you——" She was almost smothered again. "I was afraid to ask you, Nora, jewel."

"Oh, why?"

"I feared that you loved——"

"Who?"

"Rorey."

"Rorey? Oh, he's like a dear little brother, that is all." She was threatened with another smothering spell, and as soon as she could get breath, she said: "But you must ask Aunt Mary."

"Aunt Mary gave you to me, while we were yet at the old castle. But, Nora, jewel, I have just received a letter calling me to Ireland——"

"Oh, you will not go!" And she clung to him, lest she should yet lose him.

"Wait, jewel, and we shall see. I had an uncle, who has just died and left me his inheritance—he had no children, and no brother, save my father, who has been dead many years. He owned in his

own right a splendid old place near Enniskillen, on the River Erne. Darling, shall we not go back to my native land, the home of my parents, and take up our abode in that splendid old homestead of my ancestors?"

"You darling old gnome! I will go with you anywhere, except to war—oh, stop—kis—sing—there, now! Here's Captain Arranton coming in sight, seeking you. I shall run indoors."

She darted away, and as she met Edwin, he doffed his hat, saying:

"Aha, Miss Nora, aren't you a brave one to be frightened by the appearance of so nice a gentleman as Lord Drysdale? 'Tis he and no other—a villainous-looking pirate! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Captain, he is villainous looking! Then aren't *you* a gallant knight—to fly to your aunt's assistance—to offer to rescue a lady with so formidable a weapon as a drawn foil? Ho, ho, ho!"

"Come, Nora. He'll never be friends with you for calling him a villain!"

"He is villainous looking, and I daresay I shall not like him one bit." And she attempted to pass him, but he caught her hands, and said:

"But wait—he would be obliged to like you, could he see you now, your face so rosy—what is the matter?" But she wrenched her hands away from his and fled into the house.



CHAPTER LIV.

LORD MONTSTUART.

"What can we wish that is not **here**,
Between your arms and mine?
Is there on earth a space so dear
As that within the happy sphere
Two loving arms entwine?"

LADY HAWREN had repaired to her dressing room to dress for tea. Hearing a gentle tap at her door, she said:

"Come in."

Nora entered with a glow of happiness on her face and was startled to note the rapture expressed on that of Lady Hawren.

Gliding in, she clasped Her Ladyship in her arms, crying:

"Oh, my Lady——" and buried her crimson face on Lady Hawren's bosom.

"Nora, Nora! What now?"

"Oh!" she said, "I am so happy! I have the dearest lover on earth; and we are to be married and go to Ireland to live in a dear old ancestral home; and, oh! I do love him so!"

"Major O'Connor? Oh, Nora, you are to be congratulated!" And her own heart beating in sympathy with Nora's, she clasped her in her arms; then drawing the young girl to a sofa, they sat and exchanged confidences until they barely had time to be dressed for tea.

As Lady Hawren seated herself at the tea table, she asked:

"Edwin, why did not Major O'Connor remain to tea, and spend the evening with us? I should be pleased," she said, addressing Lord Drysdale, "to present him to Your Lordship. He is an army officer, a fine Irish gentleman, and most excellent company." Lord Drysdale bowed.

"I cannot imagine, dear aunt, why he hastened back to quarters. There is something the matter with the Major, he seemed all flurried, and told me he was determined to dispose of his commission and retire to private life. This is a sudden resolve. I tried to dissuade him, for I can scarcely think of leaving for foreign parts without him; but he

seems immova——” Happening to glance at Nora, her flaming cheeks and brilliant eyes revealed to him the secret, and caused him to break off in his sentence. Lady Hawren was saying to Lord Drysdale:

“And, my Lord, what of Mrs. White, who took charge of the place we left? And Benjie; or do you happen to know?”

“Oh, yes, my Lady, I remember to have heard Mr. Barry speak of them! He sent an overseer with some slaves to take charge of the plantation—a Mr. Blake, who seemed to be the very man for the place, for, within a month, he and Mrs. White were happily married. And Benjie, I have learned, has recently married a young lassie of the village near by.”

“Ha! How obtruse I have been, Nora,” continued Edwin, aside.

“On the contrary, Captain, I think you an acute observer—possessed with quick sensibility,” she returned, *sub voce*, “but, hush-s-s! Enough for the present.”

“But—you will tell me all?”

“Aye, *sub rosa*.”

“You little rogue, you have stolen from me my friend——”

“There, there——”

“I am now reminded, Captain, that I have been intrusted with some important documents for you, which I must directly hand you, in which you will find, I am sure, communications most agreeable. It is a comfort to me to be the bearer of a pleasant message. It is from your friend and former guardian, Mr. Barry,” said Lord Drysdale.

Though the rich aroma from the regi tea was exquisite, the flavor of the Tangerine oranges most delicious, the comfits and syllabub all that could

have been wished, very little of any was consumed, for each had a heart too full to think of eating. Lord Drysdale and Lady Hawren were far too happy to indulge in food. Edwin's mind was so intent on meeting with his sweet Flora on the morrow that he scarce gave thought to the conversation or to the communication awaiting him from his beloved old guardian. Nora's heart was in a tumult, her head in a whirl; she knew she had almost worshipped the dear old soldier, but had not dreamed he could love her. She was too happy, even to think, or to join in the conversation.

After returning to the drawing-room, Edwin assisted his aunt in entertaining their guest; plying him with questions, and receiving much intelligence of people and happenings in Williamsburg.

When Edwin attended Lord Drysdale to the suite of apartments assigned him, his Lordship sought out the parcel which had been intrusted to his care, and handing it to Edwin, said:

"Ah! Edwin, Captain, I pray your pardon for my negligence, but we have been so happily engaged in conversation since my arrival, I must admit I had almost forgotten to deliver this important parcel."

"True, true, my Lord, I had quite forgotten myself the kind letter from my dear guardian which your Lordship has so kindly conveyed, for which kindness pray accept my most humble gratitude. I will say good-night, now, and hasten to my own room and look into this too long neglected communication," said Edwin, as he took the parcel and departed for the seclusion of his own apartment, where, for a time, he walked up and down; then, with an effort he drew his mind from Flora and bent it upon the parcel he held in his hand, thinking it but a kindly letter from Mr. Barry. Seating himself beside a little table and untying the ribbon, he

found a long letter in the familiar chirography of his guardian, enclosing another, the superscription of which he hastily read. He sprang to his feet, and walking the floor, read again:

"To Edward, Lord Montstuart: From Donald Arranton, Baron of Strathdoon and Arranton." Composing himself, he sat down and read and re-read the startling communications and documents. He paced the room with rapid and eager strides. His aunt had retired, all were at rest; there was none to whom he could speak to proclaim his joy. His emotion was so great that he bowed his head and wept as the truth dawned upon him that there was, now, nothing to debar an immediate union with Flora, the girl of his choice. All barriers were swept away; and how happy he would be to inform her on the morrow that he would never be forced from her again.

Then carefully placing the parcel in his cabinet, he retired, not to sleep, but to spend the happiest night of his life in planning for the future. Toward day he fell into a heavy sleep.

Next morning he reread his papers to see that it was not all a cruel dream. Then he was not slow to descend to the sitting room. But early as he was, he found Lady Hawren and Lord Drysdale seated in front of the fire, in very close conversation. Now breakfast was announced.

Lady Hawren had ordered breakfast for three arranged in the little breakfast parlor adjoining the ladies' sitting room. The three sat down and Lady Hawren dismissed the servants, that they might freely converse, for she and Lord Drysdale were to disclose to Edwin their betrothal and discuss some matters pertaining thereto. Edwin had half-way guessed their secret, and Lady Hawren was almost overwhelmed by his exuberance of joy, for

he hugged and kissed her till she was as rosy as a peach. She could not understand his happiness, he had been so cast down and sad; now all was joy and delight. Then he unfolded to her the contents of Mr. Barry's letter, and read to them his Uncle Donald's letter and the documents pertaining to the restoration of the title and estates.

Sir Donald stated in his letter that he had been munificently rewarded for the suffering imposed upon the family on account of their disloyalty in past years; that the title with the estates of Montstuart and Strathdoon, of which his ancestors had been deprived and which had been in abeyance for years, were restored in full.

"And my dear aunt, Mr. Barry says: 'Your uncle Donald, now Baron of Montstuart and Strathdoon, finds himself one of the wealthiest peers of Scotland; his wife has been dead for over a year, and as you are next of kin in the male line, and as his title and estates will, at his death, fall on you, he desires you should come and take up your abode with him and be a comfort to him in his declining days.' And, dearest aunt, these documents show that my Uncle Donald has 'conveyed to Edwin Aranton, as his heir-prospective, the noble estate of Montstuart, with all its belongings, over which he is Lord.' Giving me, dear aunt, the rank to which my birth entitles me."

Congratulations flowed mutually among the happy trio, and Edwin, in his happiness, said:

"And, darling aunt, just to think that Flora will arrive to-day! I had so dreaded the thought of being forced to leave her again, but now I need never be separated from her. I shall at once dispose of my commission. There is nothing now to separate us." And he thereupon confided to Lord Drysdale his love affair. And though "cradled on

the winter's icy breast," this joyous spring morning came on flushed in great beauty.

At noon, the Fleetwood coach-and-six drew up at the steps, and Lord de Bruce was first to descend, for he had returned from his country seat just in time to join them, and said he was not going to be deprived of this delightful visit. Edwin greeted the ladies as Lord de Bruce handed them down: First, Lady de Bruce, the Misses Bruneaugh, then Flora alighted in all her sweet simplicity, and was astonished to find Edwin standing before her, blazing in a splendid uniform, his face beaming with happiness, for he was looking forward to the felicitous moment when he should have her to himself and tell her all.

The ladies went in and were conducted to their apartments; but Edwin, seizing on Lord de Bruce, drew him into the library, where he made him acquainted with his recent good fortune, told of his love for Flora, and asked permission to offer her his hand, saying:

"The title and estates which have, for nearly a century, remained in abeyance, having at length been restored to the present heir, a descendant of Sir Robert Arranton, whose heir I am, and all things in regard to the titles and restoration having been made, the Lordship of Montstuart having been settled on me, I may expect to inherit a fortune, if not superior quite equal to that which Lady Marjorie de Bruce will possess; and having given her proof of a disinterested attachment, I feel no hesitancy in laying before Your Lordship my wish of seeking a union with your daughter, fully trusting that her affections, like my own, have during her long absence remained unchanged."

Lord de Bruce was much pleased, but said:

"It is rather hard on us, my dear Lord Mont-

stuart, to recover our daughter after so many years, then be forced to give her up so soon."

The auspicious moment was not long in coming, and while Edwin and Flora, in an ecstasy of love, walked forth in the garden, he told her of his good fortune in not being forced from her presence again and of her father's sanction to their love and a speedy union; after which they would take their departure for Arranton Castle, on the lovely banks o'Doon. "As Baron of Strathdoon and Arranton, my uncle, is desirous that the honors of his family should be supported by one who is to become his heir."

Now "there was love and joy enough," and "Hope enchanted, smiled, and waved her golden hair." For

"Knight and ladye fair are met,
And under the hawthorn boughs are set;
A fairer pair were never seen
To meet beneath the hawthorne green;
He was stately and young and tall,
Dreaded in battle and loved in hall;
And when lovee, scarce told, scarce hid,
Lent to her cheek a wildering red;
When the half sigh her swelling breast
Against the silken ribbon prest;
When her blue eyes their secret told,
Tho shaded by her locks of gold,
Where would you find 'another pair
With Edwin and Flora' might compare?"

And on the morrow there was still another arrival—but this visit of the Earl of Fleetwood will be referred to in the sequel, under the title of "Lady Hawdon; or Cupid at the Altar." In which we will again meet with many of our old friends, and where particulars, left unfinished in this volume, will be carried out to completion.

Written at Innisfell, Fifteenth January, 19—.

THE END.

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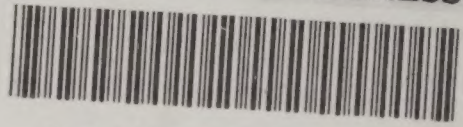
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